

‘The Right to Be Heard’: Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Political Activism, 1922-1946.

## INTRODUCTION

In the tense weeks between July 11 and September 26, 1990, the attention of the Canadian public was drawn to the unfolding Oka crisis in Quebec. A well publicized and highly controversial dispute between Canadian First Nations, non-Natives and the Canadian government, the Oka incident quickly became one of the best known demonstrations of Native political activism, even though it was only one of many Native political clashes in Canada’s history. Much of the media attention directed at Oka resulted from the explosive nature of the clash. This was not, after all, an instance of silent protest, legal dispute or government lobbying, but rather an armed conflict involving the Mohawk of Kanesatake and the non-Native residents of Oka, Quebec. In their coverage of the conflict, the media focussing solely on the violence of the conflict, not only ignored the deep historical roots of the issue and brushed aside the fact that the land dispute at the heart of the crisis began in 1717, but also failed to mention that the Mohawk had already explored other channels prior to the conflict in hopes of resolving the issue. The way in which this event was portrayed greatly affected how Canadians looked at and thought about Native political activism.

This sensationalism was not reserved exclusively for the Oka dispute, but could also be seen in the media coverage and resulting public opinion of other recent protest movements such as Gustafsen Lake (1995), Ipperwash (1995), Burnt Church (1999), and Caledonia (2006). Still further, the renewed political events directly following the Second World War attracted similar attention in Canada, as did the events of the 1960s and the Riel Uprisings in the late 1800s. What is surprising about the media treatment of these events is that although Native political activism has been around in various forms since contact, it was very rarely noticed by non-Native Canadians

unless violence erupted, or substantial monetary compensation was granted to Native peoples. In instances where political events were less controversial, or perhaps simply less salient, discussions in the media and amongst scholars were generally lacking.

The political activities of the late nineteenth century have clearly attracted much attention due to the intense social, political and economic change produced by the 1885 Uprisings. After all, it was in this pivotal year that the politicization of First Nations and Métis faced a great degree of opposition.<sup>1</sup> Once the Uprisings had been suppressed, the Canadian government, in an attempt to defend against further rebellions employed several restrictive policies. The implementation of the pass system, amendments to the *Indian Act* which restricted, among other things, religious ceremonies, the allocation of reserves and the issuance of scrip, were all designed to show Native populations that political agitation would not be tolerated. As a result of the hard-line stance taken by the Department of Indian Affairs (hereafter the Department), the entire political dynamic of First Nations communities was altered. Communities that were once free to move across the country at will, participate in significant Sun Dance ceremonies and maintain traditional government structures were now expected to stay on their reserves, abandon ‘uncivilized’ religious practices and follow the leadership of Department appointed Native leaders.<sup>2</sup>

New authority figures such as Indian agents, farm instructors and church leaders also appeared on reserves to exert control over the lives of the First Nations, and facilitate the transition of the groups to their new status as wards of the state. In many ways government efforts to control the Native populations had some success, as the period directly after the Uprising was

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<sup>1</sup> Discussions of the Riel Uprisings are often framed in terms of a pivotal shift in Native politics. In the years directly preceding the Uprisings, the Métis and First Nations groups in the areas surrounding Red River were economically, socially and politically strong. After the Uprising, however, the control that the Métis and First Nations had gained over the years quickly disappeared and it seemed as though the groups would never be able to recover.

<sup>2</sup> John Jennings, “The North West Mounted Police and Indian Policy,” in *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition* Eds. F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1986), 228.

characterized by a decrease in the outward expression of Native political identity. This is not to say that Native people fell into political irrelevance, as many historians have argued convincingly that Native groups were able to oppose Department restrictions, but the types of political actions utilized by such groups had to be adjusted.<sup>3</sup>

While the year 1885 represents the moment at which Native politics in Canada experienced its greatest attack, the era directly following the Second World War has been associated with significant political growth. Once the conflict ended overseas, historian James Pitsula argued that First Nations and Métis peoples returned with a renewed desire to address the social, political and economic problems in their communities. According to Pitsula, Native veterans returned with “a sharpened sense of identity, new self-confidence, and a determination to take up the challenge of political organization and leadership.”<sup>4</sup> Native activism exploded, attracting a degree of media attention that had been lacking throughout the Depression years.

While the years following the Second World War brought Native activism into the minds of Canadians, the 1960s have perhaps received the most attention from scholars as an era of unprecedented Native political rebirth.<sup>5</sup> This was a period in which socially, politically and economically oppressed peoples around the world began to unite in opposition to their treatment by dominant forces. The Civil Rights, Red Power, Women’s Rights and Students’ Movements,

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<sup>3</sup> Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 18.

<sup>4</sup> James M. Pitsula, “The CCF Government and the Formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians,” *Prairie Forum* 19 no. 2 (1994): 131.

<sup>5</sup> James Burke, *Paper Tomahawks: From Red Tape to Red Power* (Winnipeg: Queenston House Pub., 1976); Troy Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian self-determination and the rise of Indian Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); James Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era: A Narrative Map of the Indian Ecumenical Conference* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Sally Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda, 1968-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981);

each served to influence the ideologies and activities of similarly subjugated groups.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the general trend towards social change was so widespread that the 1960s has since been thought of as a defining moment for minority groups in world history.

In Canada, the force of Native political activism was further intensified by the White Paper of 1969, issued by the Canadian Government. The policy document caused unparalleled opposition across Canada as the then Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chrétien proposed the abolition of the *Indian Act*. In effect, if approved, this policy would abolish the special status granted to First Nations peoples through the treaties—a move that was viewed by the Native population as a blatant violation of the historic agreements. Capturing the reactions of First Nations groups to the White Paper, *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda, 1968-1970* by anthropologist Sally Weaver proposed that,

the fear and insecurity [the White Paper] brought to tribal communities were so great that nativism was the reaction—a process of cultural reaffirmation which often arises when cultural systems are severely threatened. Instead of seeking equality, Indian communities reasserted their cultural uniqueness, emphasizing their social distance from the dominant society.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed the cultural unification that developed out of the projected ideas of the White Paper acted as a catalyst for political progress, and as a result, the political gains of Native people throughout the 1960s and 1970s, such as federal funding for political organization, were unprecedented.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John Dittmer, *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement* (College Station: Published for University of Texas at Arlington by Texas A&M University Press, 1993); John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985); Carl Oglesby, *Ravens in the Storm: A Personal History of the 1960s Antiwar Movement* (New York: Scribner, 2008); Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens, G.A: University of Georgia Press, 2006); Leila J. Rupp, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy*.

<sup>7</sup> Sally Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda, 1968-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Weaver, 4-8.

Evolving directly out of these accomplishments of the 1960s political movement, the 1980s and 1990s were dominated by intense demonstrations of direct action on behalf of Canadian Native populations. Returning in many ways to the military action employed in the Riel Uprisings, Native peoples revealed their frustration with other political channels.<sup>9</sup> After years of efforts to gain recognition of social and economic concerns through legal action and government lobbying, the volatile situation deteriorated. In a political environment that denied Native groups justice for their historic grievances, activists sought out increasingly direct ways to express their political ideas. Blockading roads and railroads, military standoffs and protests were just a few of the methods employed by Native groups throughout this era.

Amid these periods of significant politicization, however, lies a political phase that has received less attention by scholars. Historical writings on the political actions of Canada's First Nations and Métis populations have focussed heavily on the abovementioned time periods leaving the intermediate period of activism, between 1922 and 1946, significantly underrepresented. Despite the lamentations of Métis researchers Lawrence Barkwell, Leah Dorion and Darren Prefontaine that "the development of Métis political activism after the 1885 Diaspora and up until the early 1960s, remains a neglected period in Métis studies," to date no comprehensive study exists of Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis political activism during the interwar period.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bruce W. Hodgins, Ute Lischke and David T. McNab eds., *Blockades and Resistance: Studies in Actions of Peace and the Temagami Blockades of 1988-89* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2003); Bruce D'Arcus, *Boundaries of Dissent: Protest and State Power in the Media Age* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Sandra Lambertus, *Wartime Images, Peacetime Wounds: The Media and the Gustafsen Lake Standoff* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Miller, *Lethal Legacy: Current Native Controversy in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2004); Miller, *Reflections on Native-Newcomer Relations: Selected Essays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence J. Barkwell, Leah Dorion, and Darren R. Prefontaine, *Resources for Métis Researchers* (Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute of the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, 1999), 28-29. Available at the Virtual Museum of Métis History, <[www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)>, accessed November 19, 2007.

In part this absence can be explained by a general reluctance among historians and other scholars to address First Nations and Métis issues concurrently. Many researchers have reasoned that the two groups are simply too different to examine together. As J.R. Miller keenly observed, researchers of First Nations and Métis history have been inclined to “allow obsolete statutory distinctions that were developed in Ottawa in pursuit of bureaucratic convenience and economy to shape their research strategies.”<sup>11</sup> This tendency to follow the government-prescribed cultural categories in many ways has prevented the creation of a complete political history of Saskatchewan Native groups that portrays the extent of political mobilization in this era.

Where the political activities of Saskatchewan Native peoples are mentioned in historical works, it is done generally to contextualize a separate argument. In these studies, while political activities are acknowledged, this passing recognition gives the impression that Native political action throughout the interwar era did not warrant separate or in-depth study. Ultimately, the general absence of historical writings on either First Nations or Métis activism indicates that this era was not viewed as a legitimate period of political activism. Hardly comparable to the sensationalized and explosive events of previous and subsequent eras, the interwar period has been viewed as little more than a precursor to the political activity of the 1960s. After all, it has generally been accepted that for many years after the Uprisings First Nations and Métis groups had been relegated to political irrelevance and were no longer capable of major political action. In sharp contrast to this belief, however, this study will show that throughout the interwar period a significant amount of political action was occurring in Saskatchewan, but the ways political action was manifested differed from the more intense actions taken at other times.

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<sup>11</sup> J.R. Miller, “From Riel to the Métis,” in *Reflections on Native-Newcomer Relations: Selected Essays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 52.

In the more subdued interwar era, two different forms of resistance were employed—political organization, which involved the establishment of Native political societies and organized attempts at mobilization, and political resistance, which included unorganized actions taken in opposition to government policy. Using these two political methods, Saskatchewan Native populations moved cautiously towards political recognition. Though the Uprisings occurred decades earlier, there is evidence that Natives and non-Natives were still recovering from the aftermath of the political events.<sup>12</sup> Native populations were fully aware that if they moved too quickly towards their political goals, Canadians would view the organizations as threatening. Furthermore, Native populations found themselves unfamiliar with the Canadian political system, and therefore needed time to adjust their actions. As a result, in this era Native organizations sent polite petitions and lobbied governments in hopes of bringing attention to their causes.

Yet, if the restrained political actions of the interwar era in Saskatchewan failed to attract scholarly attention because the era was not viewed as overly political, this did not explain why more consideration had been granted to the simultaneous Native political activities in Alberta. The political movements of First Nations and Métis in Alberta began just as modestly in the interwar era yet managed to attract the attention of Professor of Native Studies Laurie Meijer-Drees, anthropologist Joe Sawchuk and others. Devoting much attention to the development of the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA) and the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA) throughout the 1930s, the existing published works created the impression that the Alberta experience was more worthy of study. Meijer-Drees in her 2002 publication *The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action*, investigated the first three decades of the IAA in hopes of understanding the

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Joe Ross by Murray Dobbin, Vancouver, British Columbia, n.d. Tape available from the SAB, R-A1329.1, R-A1329.2. <Accessed March 14, 2008>; Interview with Thomas Major by Murray Dobbin, Regina, Saskatchewan, March 14, 1978. Transcript available at the Virtual Museum of Métis History <Accessed April 16, 2008>.

factors contributing to the development of the organization, how the organization functioned and finally the relationships between the IAA, non-Native individuals and the Canadian state.<sup>13</sup> Meijer-Drees' contribution offers a more focussed view of Indian politics by looking specifically at the structures and ideologies at play within the IAA.

The general trend in the historiography that produced works highlighting “scattered and reactionary” moments of activism or larger pan-Indian movements informed Meijer-Drees' decision to pursue a history of the IAA in which Native political philosophies would be addressed.<sup>14</sup> In explaining the need for such a study Meijer-Drees has contended that although Native peoples have had a substantial impact on Canada's political system, these actions have largely gone unrecognized by historians.<sup>15</sup> Through her work, therefore, Meijer-Drees managed to rectify this historical gap, yet at the same time, she helped illustrate the need for further studies on Native political activism, particularly in other geographical areas. Indeed this work has contributed greatly to this goal of expanding the body of literature on Native politics, yet the process of expansion remains incomplete.

Sawchuk's 1998 publication, *The Dynamics of Native Politics*, which focussed on the relationship between the MAA and the federal and provincial governments, and analyzed how such relationships have affected the success of Native political aims, also helped to illustrate the relevance of focussed studies on Native political activism. Speaking bluntly about the effectiveness of Native political organizations, Sawchuk revealed how government funding and Native and non-Native power structures determined the direction of the movements. Other authors, such as professor of law Catherine Bell, and anthropologist Paul Driben, have similarly dedicated

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<sup>13</sup> Laurie Meijer-Drees, *The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), xiv.

<sup>14</sup> Meijer-Drees, xv.

<sup>15</sup> Meijer-Drees, xiii.



significant attention to the development and operation of Métis settlements in Alberta, which have been a major source of contention since their inception in the 1930s.<sup>16</sup> In the end the existence of a large body of works concentrating on Alberta Native organizations was indicative of the need for similar studies of Saskatchewan Native political activism.

Despite this need the historiography of Saskatchewan Native political activism during the interwar era is relatively sparse. In terms of published works focussing on Native political issues, the majority are dedicated to analysis of the Riel Uprisings, the treaties or, in more recent publications the interaction between Saskatchewan Natives and Canadian governments.<sup>17</sup> Some historical works from the early twentieth century are similar in that they fail to mobilize First Nations and Métis voices. These works had been written by outsiders, largely because Native groups were unable to record their own histories. This not only ensured that only certain types of events—those deemed most politically, economically or socially relevant—would be recorded, but also that the events recorded would follow the social ideals of the day, many of which perpetuated ideas of Native cultural inferiority.

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<sup>16</sup> For further information see Catherine Bell, *Alberta's Métis Settlement Legislation: An Overview of Ownership* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1994); Bell, *Contemporary Métis Justice: The Settlement Way* (Saskatoon: Native Law Centre, University of Saskatchewan, 1999); Paul Driben, *We are Métis: The Ethnography of a Halfbreed Community in Northern Alberta* (New York: AMS Press, 1985); Theresa A. Ferguson, *Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History, the handbook* (Edmonton: Métis Association of Alberta, 1982); Joe Sawchuk, *Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History, Métis Association of Alberta* (Edmonton: Métis Association of Alberta, 1981); T.C. Pocklington, *The Government and Politics of the Alberta Métis Settlements* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1991); Denis Wall, *The Alberta Métis Letters: 1930-1940, Policy Review and Annotations* (Ottawa: DWRG Press, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Examples of published works that focussed on the Uprisings include: Thomas Flanagan, *Rebellion in the Northwest: Louis Riel and the Métis People* (Toronto: Grolier, 1984); Donald McLean, *1885, Métis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1985) and Desmond Morton, *Rebellions in Canada* (Toronto: Grolier, 1979). Examples of published works that focus on interactions between Saskatchewan Natives and Canadian governments include: F. Laurie Barron, "Introduction to Document Six: The CCF and the Saskatchewan Métis Society," *Native Studies Review* 10(1): 1995, 89-91; F. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); James Pitsula, "The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians, 1944-64," *The Canadian Historical Review* 71(1): March 1994, 21-52; James Pitsula, "The Thatcher Government in Saskatchewan and the Revival of Métis Nationalism, 1964-71," *Great Plains Quarterly* 17 no. 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1997): 213-235.

Early works such as George Stanley's *The Birth of Western Canada*, first published in 1936, though diverging slightly from some of the abovementioned issues associated with outsider research, nevertheless reflected a preoccupation with major political events. In his introduction to the 1992 edition, political scientist Thomas Flanagan noted the unique way in which Stanley wrote about First Nations and Métis populations.<sup>18</sup> Unlike previous and, in fact many subsequent historians, Stanley approached the topic of the Riel Rebellions with a certain degree of sympathy for the Métis cause, and consequently approached the topic in a way that did not perpetuate "the prejudices of Old Canada."<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, Stanley's work reaffirmed the place of the Rebellions as the most significant events in western Canadian history, thus overshadowing any subsequent political efforts of Native populations.<sup>20</sup>

Noted French ethnologist Marcel Giraud, broke away from the already established fixation on Riel and the Rebellions, and instead privileged examining the Métis people as a whole rather than simply through Riel. Unlike Stanley, Giraud, in his 1945 work, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, traced the rise of the Métis into an identifiable people and then detailed the subsequent fall of the newly found nation as a result of the incursion of White settlers in the west. Largely unconcerned with the political actions of Riel, Giraud refrained from analyzing the political events of the 1885 Resistance, instead focussing on a strictly social interpretation of Métis history.

Steeped in the dominant social thought of the day, however, *The Métis in the Canadian West* reflected the widely held beliefs of social evolution. Though Giraud admitted in a footnote that his analysis was not meant to perpetuate a cultural hierarchy relegating indigenous cultures

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Flanagan, Introduction to George Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), xii. Originally published, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley, xxv.

<sup>20</sup> It is true that the Métis Uprisings were significant in the history of Western Canada, yet my purpose is to show that the attention granted to these events should not overshadow other political events. Further the attention granted to the Uprisings by historians such as Stanley has led to a narrow understanding of Native political activities.

below White culture, Giraud maintained that the two cultures were structurally very different.<sup>21</sup>

Despite this caveat, however, Giraud's work essentially denied the Métis people a social, economic and political future after their defeat at Batoche in 1885. Giraud impressed upon his readers the idea that the Métis simply could not recover their previous social, political and economic stature once White people arrived on the scene. Giraud's belief that the Métis nation would not survive the incursion of non-Natives, paired with his insistence on avoiding political discussions helped to explain, in part, why there was no mention of the political achievements of the Métis people after Batoche. In fact, although Giraud was conducting research throughout the Prairies during the time in which Métis were beginning to reorganize, the ethnologist refrained from mentioning activism.

While early Métis historiography reflected either a preoccupation with seminal events, or simply described Métis history in terms of social evolution, early First Nations historiography reflected a desire to record traditional ways of life. *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study* by anthropologist David Mandelbaum, is a seminal work providing a detailed history of the Plains Cree. Though published in 1940, Mandelbaum's work still stands as one of the most comprehensive cultural studies ever published. The foremost purpose of the book was to preserve a record of the old life of the Cree, and as a result, Mandelbaum documented the social, political and economic practices of the group. Undoubtedly, *The Plains Cree* has continued to contribute to Canadian First Nations history with good reason, yet Mandelbaum's influential work revealed little about the political inclinations of First Nations people, a move which undermined First Nations politicization.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, Vol. 1. Trans. George Woodcock (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986), xiv. Originally published by the Institut d'Ethnologie, Museum d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, under the title *Le Métis Canadien*, 1945.

<sup>22</sup> David Mandlebaum, *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study* (New York: AMS Press, 1979).

Almost twenty years later, reacting to the belief that Natives were not political, Katherine Pettipas' book, *Severing the Ties that Bind*, highlighted forms of political resistance existing prior to the interwar period.<sup>23</sup> Establishing the conditions facing Native populations on the prairies after the Uprisings, Pettipas has observed that Native politics were increasingly controlled and suppressed in the late nineteenth century. Pettipas proposed,

The incorporation of indigenous populations into the newly emerging nation-states dominated by the newcomers was achieved through unilaterally imposed special legislation, the destruction of local economies, and attempts to dismantle traditional beliefs, customs, and social organization. The result was the reduction of politically independent societies to powerless minorities within the industrialized Western nation-state system.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these attempts to restrict Native ways of life in hopes of eradicating all vestiges of 'uncivilized' societies, Native populations in this era fought back. Detailing the repression of First Nations' religious practices throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Pettipas explored the actions taken by First Nations in response to Department restrictions.

In witnessing the ways in which First Nations groups handled unmitigated Departmental intrusion into a highly significant aspect of indigenous life, it is possible to understand how Native people conceptualized political action and identity. Employing methods of compromise, dissidence and acceptance, First Nations peoples chose their responses to religious restrictions carefully and purposefully.<sup>25</sup> Depending on the situation, Native groups might send petitions to Department officials opposing restrictive policies, or in some instances, as a form of direct protest, Natives

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<sup>23</sup> Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Practices on the Prairies*

<sup>24</sup> Pettipas, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Pettipas, 143.

would ignore Department rules and participate in restricted activities.<sup>26</sup> These strategies also applied to First Nations' dealings with land, education and economic rights during the interwar era.

Pettipas' work was helpful for this study in that it exposed similarities of Native political strategies in the late 1880s and the interwar era. In the interwar era, as in the late 1880s, Native organizations sent petitions advancing their political claims to the Canadian government and refused to obey mobility restrictions, preferring instead to travel off reserve to politically organize without explicit permission in the form of a pass. But perhaps the most important similarity between the political actions of Native groups in the 1880s and those in the interwar era was the persistence employed by both towards their political causes. In the 1880s Native groups, despite heavy opposition, continued to insist upon their right to their religious ceremonies, while in the mid-twentieth century, Natives similarly agitated for land, education and political power.

By the late twentieth century discussions of Native political activism became more common as can be seen in the works of Anglican cleric and teacher Stan Cuthand, and historians such as James M. Pitsula and F. Laurie Barron. Cuthand, in his work, "The Native Peoples of the Prairie Provinces in the 1920s and 1930s," published in 1978, focussed on the involvement of prairie Native populations in social and political reforms after the First World War.<sup>27</sup> To illustrate the degree to which Native peoples politicized within this era, Cuthand traced the establishment of the League of Indians of Canada in Saskatchewan and Alberta. In detailing the move towards political organization in this era, Cuthand brought attention and legitimization to the political accomplishments of prairie Natives. The article, however, remained focussed solely on the League

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<sup>26</sup> Pettipas, 173.

<sup>27</sup> Stan Cuthand, "The Native Peoples of the Prairie Provinces in the 1920s and 1930s," In *One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserve Indians Since Treaty 7*. Eds. Ian Getty and Donald B. Smith (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), 31-42.

of Indians of Canada, and therefore left the impression that political activism was an isolated occurrence within a single political organization.

Pitsula, on the other hand, had written a variety of works concerning First Nations and Métis politics, specifically in Saskatchewan. Focussed largely on the interactions between Native and non-Native political practices, Pitsula's analysis spanned from the early 1920s into the twenty-first century. Using this time frame, Pitsula was able to outline and analyze the development of early Saskatchewan political movements, trace the maturity of Native politics into the present and offer predictions for the future. While some of Pitsula's later works, such as his chapter in Howard Leeson's *Saskatchewan Politics: Into the Twenty-First Century*, entitled "First Nations and Saskatchewan Politics," and article, "The Thatcher Government in Saskatchewan and the Revival of Métis Nationalism, 1964-71" have discussed the implications of an increasing population of politically minded Native peoples, Pitsula also made an effort to detail how Native politics in Saskatchewan began.<sup>28</sup>

Pitsula's earlier articles, both published in 1994, however, were specifically concerned with the interaction between Saskatchewan Treaty First Nations and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). In "The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians, 1944-64," Pitsula compared the ways in which both the CCF and the Canadian government implemented ideals of liberal political philosophy. Highlighting the importance for both governments of maintaining equality, individualism and freedom, the CCF, similar to Pierre Trudeau's government, attempted to introduce policies which would achieve these ideals for the First Nations population of

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<sup>28</sup> James Pitsula, "The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians, 1944-64," *The Canadian Historical Review* 75 no. 1 (March 1994): 21-52; Pitsula, "The CCF Government and the Formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians," *Prairie Forum* 19 no. 2 (1994): 131-151; Pitsula, "The Thatcher Government in Saskatchewan and the Revival of Métis Nationalism, 1964-71," *Great Plains Quarterly* no. 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1997): 213-235; Pitsula, "First Nations and Saskatchewan Politics," In *Saskatchewan Politics: Into the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Howard A. Leeson (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 2001).

Saskatchewan.<sup>29</sup> “The CCF Government and the Formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians,” similarly focussed on the policies of the provincial government, yet in this article Pitsula argued that the policies of the CCF, along with the participation of Saskatchewan First Nations in the Second World War, were categorically responsible for the unification of Saskatchewan Native political groups under one organization—the Union of Saskatchewan Indians (USI). In pursuing this argument, Pitsula meticulously outlined the already existing First Nations political organizations in Saskatchewan, and as such, established that significant politicization had already been occurring in the interwar era.

Despite the attention granted to Native political activism prior to 1944, however, Pitsula’s discussion was designed simply to contextualize the later formation of the USI. It was not Pitsula’s intention to prove that First Nations people were politically capable prior to the 1940s, but rather by establishing that there were already many First Nations organizations at work in Saskatchewan throughout the interwar era, Pitsula intended to demonstrate that the organizations were not unified and therefore remained largely ineffective. As a result, Pitsula posited that the organizations prior to the advent of the USI accomplished very little, and that the influence of a non-Native government was needed to ‘fix’ the organizations.

Barron’s contributions to Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis politics are similar to Pitsula’s in that both historians focus on the interaction between Saskatchewan Natives and the CCF, yet Barron’s argument is less forgiving of CCF policies than Pitsula’s. In his 1990 article “The CCF and the Development of Métis Colonies in Southern Saskatchewan during the Premiership of T.C. Douglas, 1944-61,” Barron discussed the policies of Douglas’ CCF government in relation to the Métis population. Detailing the development of Métis colonies as a

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<sup>29</sup> Pitsula, “The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians, 1944-64,” 35.

method of social and economic rehabilitation, and as a way in which to integrate the isolated Métis of Saskatchewan with the general population, Barron has argued that unlike the Patterson government's efforts to aid the Métis in prior years, which manifested in the creation of Métis settlements, the efforts of Douglas' CCF government were motivated by humanitarian concerns and not political patronage.<sup>30</sup>

Despite this concession that the CCF maintained a genuine concern for the welfare of the Métis population, Barron has insisted that the ideologies behind the policies of the CCF were nevertheless grounded in perceptions of racism and did not reflect respect for Aboriginal rights. And though the CCF allocated land to the Métis in the form of colonies, the political rights that the Métis expected to accompany such land did not materialize. Instead, according to Barron, "Métis people received government services as disadvantaged people, not by virtue of Aboriginal status. Among other things, this meant that the CCF did little to encourage the political organization of the Métis or to give the existing Métis society any real role in the development of the colonies."<sup>31</sup>

Barron's 1997 publication, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF*, further analyzed the treatment of the provincial Native population under Douglas, and included CCF policies regarding First Nations peoples and the Métis.<sup>32</sup> A significant amount of time was spent detailing the influence of Douglas in the formation of united First Nations and Métis political organizations, and therefore, Barron carefully outlined the already existing political organizations. Barron speaks specifically to how Douglas took a noted interest in uniting the First Nations organizations under the newly created Union of Saskatchewan Indians in

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<sup>30</sup> F. Laurie Barron, "The CCF and the Development of Métis Colonies in Southern Saskatchewan during the Premiership of T.C. Douglas, 1944-61," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 10 no.2 (1990): 261.

<sup>31</sup> Barron, "The CCF and the Development of Métis Colonies," 262.

<sup>32</sup> F. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).



1946, yet dedicated considerably less time and effort to the Métis organizations themselves.

Ultimately Barron's critical analysis of the CCF's policies departed significantly from the positive analysis of CCF policies offered by Pitsula, and revealed much about the CCF government's actual attitudes towards Native activism.

Both Pitsula and Barron's works are useful in that they reveal details about the types of First Nations and Métis activism at work in the interwar era, which in essence highlighted the legitimacy of the Native political movement. Yet, for both historians, the political efforts during the interwar era were not the main focus and serve merely to explain the political situations and policies of the CCF. As a result of this focus on government practices and policies, both Pitsula and Barron refrain from emphasizing a Native view of political activism.

While Barron and Pitsula have addressed the political interactions between Saskatchewan Natives and the provincial CCF government, two biographical works, Edward Ahenakew's *Voices of the Plains Cree* and Jean Goodwill and Norma Sluman's *John Tootoosis* examine First Nations political activism in the interwar period. Published eleven years apart, these books provide a record of the political activities of the interwar era through the recollections of two noted First Nations leaders. In capturing the memories of activists, both of these projects were undertaken either by members of the Native community or the activist himself. The resulting works were not designed to be scholarly, and followed literary frameworks that reflected this. Nevertheless, both works offer a rare glimpse into the lives of First Nations activists that could generally not be seen in published historical records, and therefore, contribute much to the analysis of Saskatchewan Native activism.

Ahenakew's semi-autobiographical book *Voices* combined the eloquent structure of traditional First Nations story-telling with contemporary historical analysis. Published

posthumously in 1973 by family friend and author, Ruth Matheson Buck, *Voices* was developed out of Ahenakew's 1923 manuscript entitled, *Old Keyam*. *Old Keyam*, a compilation of notes from the oral accounts of Chief Thunderchild, served as a window through which the conditions of the Saskatchewan Cree could be seen.<sup>33</sup> The literary structure of *Voices* follows the oral tradition of storytelling in which the fictitious character Old Keyam, (Keyam is a Cree word which literally translates into "I do not care"), revealed the Cree viewpoint on traditional and contemporary traditions and issues.<sup>34</sup> Old Keyam essentially served as a representative of Ahenakew himself, as Old Keyam recounted the political philosophies and ideals known to be held by Ahenakew. When read as a semi-autobiographical work without the expectation of scholarly content and form, *Voices* offers detailed insight into both the political life of the first president of the League of Indians of Western Canada, and the political identities of the Saskatchewan First Nations. *Voices* helps to contextualize the causes and progression of Saskatchewan Native activism through personal references to Ahenakew.

Published in 1984, *John Tootoosis* detailed the life and political legacy of Cree leader John Tootoosis and, according to Tootoosis' daughter Goodwill, and co-author Sluman, meant to inform Canadians about what it was like to be a Treaty Indian.<sup>35</sup> *John Tootoosis* offered valuable insight into the political ideals of the Cree leader, and the book not only exposed the evolution of political ideas and organizations throughout the interwar era, but, further, helped to outline the pervasive political identity not only of Tootoosis, but of the First Nations peoples as a whole.

Although the authors have admitted that *John Tootoosis* was never meant to serve as a scholarly work due to the biases held by both Goodwill and Sluman, the work offers a serious

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<sup>33</sup> Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree* ed. Ruth M. Buck (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973), 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree*, 13.

<sup>35</sup> Jean Goodwill and Norma Sluman, *John Tootoosis* (Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 1982), vii.

contribution to the understanding of First Nations activism in the early twentieth century. *John Tootoosis* grants insight into the life of a Cree leader that might have been impossible to accomplish by a non-Native researcher, yet the authors have also left room for further historical analysis of Native political activism, especially in a way that does not focus exclusively on the life of one leader.

Focussing more specifically on the Native politics of the interwar era, journalist and social activist Murray Dobbin has contributed two significant works. The first article, “Métis Struggles of the Twentieth Century: The Saskatchewan Métis Society—1935-1950,” published in 1978, outlined the development of a Métis political organization in Saskatchewan during the Depression.<sup>36</sup> This work chiefly provided details of the goals and activities of the Saskatchewan Métis Society, and as such, afforded a perfect place to begin researching the organization in greater detail. *The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady & Malcolm Norris, Métis Patriots of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, published in 1981, was similarly relevant to this study as it meticulously explored the development of First Nations and Métis organizations in Alberta and Saskatchewan.<sup>37</sup> Focussed largely on the lives and political action of Métis leaders Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Dobbin explored the economic premises behind the development of Native political organizations.

With a Marxist approach, Dobbin investigated Métis political issues according to ideas of social structure and economic theory. At the heart of his discussion, Dobbin was concerned with the ways in which the Canadian state left Native populations economically oppressed. Although his focus on Brady and Norris required Dobbin to trace the temporal and geographical trail taken by these leaders—a journey which ultimately left the period of Native politics prior to 1940 in

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<sup>36</sup> Murray Dobbin, “Métis Struggles of the Twentieth Century: The Saskatchewan Métis Society—1935-1950,” *New Breed Magazine*, 1978.

<sup>37</sup> Murray Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half-Men: The Story of Jim Brady & Malcolm Norris, Métis Patriots of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981).

Saskatchewan unexplored—Dobbin provided enough information about Saskatchewan Native politics to see that more was left to be analyzed.

Since Dobbin's publication the historical record of First Nations and Métis issues has become more complete. Biographies of major political leaders such as Big Bear and Ahtahkakoop<sup>38</sup> have been produced, and there has also been a simultaneous effort to focus in on Native communities and examine class relations, and community development. Despite a veritable explosion of published works on Saskatchewan Native issues, however, the political efforts of Native populations in the interwar period have been eclipsed by other political events.

In terms of methodology, there were several significant challenges affecting this study, the most notable relating to the availability of primary sources on First Nations and Métis activism. While one might expect to find large collections of papers of Native leaders and organizations, very little was available for consultation. In large part this can be attributed to the era in which these organizations developed, as many leaders did not record evidence of their political journeys. However, in instances where significant documentation did exist, as with the Saskatchewan Métis Society, many of the records have since been lost.<sup>39</sup> As a result, the bulk of the records available for consultation consisted of correspondence with and documentation about the societies found in the collections of Provincial ministers and politicians.

Ideally this project would have countered this challenge for sources by conducting interviews with various Native leaders who were active throughout the interwar era in order to gain

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<sup>38</sup> Donald C. Barnett, *Poundmaker* (Don Mills, Ont.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1976); Hugh Dempsey, *Big Bear: The End of Freedom* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984); J.R. Miller, *Big Bear (Mistahimusqua)* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1996); Deanna Christensen, *Ahtahkakoop: the epic account of a Plains Cree Head Chief, his people, and their vision for survival* (Shell Lake, SK: Ahtahkakoop Publishing, 2000) and Abel Watetch, *Paypot and his people* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> According to members of the SMS, secretary-treasurer, Wilna Moore retained the records for the society, yet in an interview with Moore, likely in 1977 or 1978, Murray Dobbin learned that Moore had misplaced the records.

a sense of the political atmosphere at the time. Unfortunately most of the leaders, though relatively young during this era, have since passed on, and although it might have been possible to interview family members in search of similar information, such a process would likely not have produced the detail this project required. Luckily, in conducting his research on the political activities of Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Murray Dobbin completed a significant number of interviews which proved very useful for this project.

The majority of Dobbin's interviews were conducted with Métis activists and community members, and therefore served as major sources of information. Some of the interviews are available at the Virtual Museum of Métis History and offer full transcriptions, while others, such as the interviews of John Tootoosis and Joe Ross, lack transcriptions but the recordings are available at the Saskatchewan Archives Board. Drawing largely on these bodies of work, I was able to ascertain details about the origins, development and challenges of Saskatchewan Métis organizations, and, further, was able to get a sense of the way in which Métis people identified with politics. Certainly, as with most oral interviews, the potential for errors was present, as the interviews required the recollection of memories from thirty to fifty years prior. Nevertheless, when used to contextualize the information provided by published sources and government documents these interviews proved valuable.

Dobbin's interviews were similarly helpful for my analysis of First Nations activism as First Nations leader John Tootoosis was also included in the roster of interviewees. The information gleaned from this source helped to contextualize the data from the *Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs* and correspondence from the Department. The *Annual Reports* and documents from Record Group 10, available at Library and Archives Canada, were particularly helpful in that they revealed Department attitudes towards the conditions of Native

peoples, the development of Native political organizations, and further highlighted the political strategies implemented to counter these activities.

Ultimately this thesis is an attempt to fill a significant gap in the historiography of Native political activism in Saskatchewan. At present, the political activities of First Nations and Métis groups in Saskatchewan between 1922 and 1946 occupy a mere footnote in the historiography—often mentioned merely to create context for other issues, and not seen as worthy of study in its own right—yet the efforts of Native groups across Saskatchewan to secure political power within this era clearly deserve documentation. Although the political activism in the interwar era was manifested in more subdued activities, the role of this era as a legitimate period of politicization should not be underestimated, and the effects of such politicization on subsequent Native political efforts should not be ignored.

In establishing that activism was a widespread and dominant force in Saskatchewan during the interwar period, this study will argue that this was not a new era of political activism, but rather a resurgence of political identities that existed all along. Therefore, in bringing a degree of continuity to the history of Saskatchewan Native activism, this study is an attempt to bring new analysis to discussions of Native political activism which have typically framed certain time periods as either being politically active or stagnant, based on the perceived political activities occurring. Naturally, the eras in which overt forms of direct action occurred are far more noticeable to the media, scholars and the Canadian public, yet these events should not be allowed to overshadow the less salient activities of other time periods.

The result of ignoring this era as a legitimate period of Native politicization is that subsequent eras employing direct and often violent activism seem to occur out of nowhere. But by granting recognition to this political movement, the gradual progression of Native political

responses from subdued in the 1930s to direct in the 1990s becomes visible. This progression also reveals the adaptation of Native political identities and movements over time, recognizing that in times where outward political expression was less possible, Native groups typically engaged in covert forms of resistance, which typically acted outside of prescribed laws, such as refusing to follow government regulations. In times when the conditions were conducive to overt expressions of resistance, Native populations were able to organize official associations, which eventually became legitimized by the Canadian state.

In establishing the argument that Saskatchewan Native political activism was a force throughout the interwar era, chapter one elucidates the reasons for the rise in political activism within Saskatchewan Native communities, placing emphasis on the economic and social conditions during the Depression, administrative changes to Native ways of life throughout the interwar era and the emergence of capable Native leaders as pivotal conditions for Native activism. Chapter two then traces the development of First Nations and Métis political organizations that began in the early 1920s and 1930s, and further highlights the challenges faced by such organizations. The general opposition faced by these political associations helps to illustrate how these challenges did not eradicate the movement, but rather forced adaptation in political action. The final chapter reveals aspects of political theory which affected the development and adaptation of political organizations in this era. Highlighting the political strategies that developed, the chapter details the accomplishments of Native activism in this era, focussing especially on changes to government attitudes as a result of persistent political efforts.

## **CHAPTER ONE: Catalysts for Political Revival**

In beginning the discussion of First Nations and Métis activism within Saskatchewan between 1922 and 1946 one must first get a sense of what caused the need for political activity.<sup>40</sup> Two significant events, the Great Depression and the Second World War, dominated this era, and while both were responsible in some way for the development of Native activism, other factors existed as well. When carefully considering the far-reaching effects of a faltering economy, it would seem that the poor economic conditions of the 1930s would be enough to create a politically charged situation, but upon closer examination, the role of Depression in Native activism was only

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<sup>40</sup> In this study the terms activism, political activity and political movement will be used interchangeably to denote instances of political action that were not necessarily organized. Political organization, on the other hand, will be used to specifically discuss issues relating to official First Nations or Métis political organizations.



one part of the picture. This chapter will explore the effects of the general economic downturn on the political attitudes and actions of Native people in Saskatchewan, but will also explain how dissatisfaction with treaty implementation and Métis land policies, the enforcement of provincial game regulations and the emergence of capable First Nations and Métis political leaders further helped to create the necessary conditions for political upheaval.<sup>41</sup>

The western treaties played a formative role in the revival of political activism between 1922 and 1946. And though the Métis have a place in the history of the treaties, these agreements also represent a boundary or breaking point between the history, identity and political goals of First Nations and Métis groups. The Métis were given the option of being included in many of the western treaties as Indians,<sup>42</sup> yet the treaties are largely not a source of contention within Métis organizations. Instead, the objectives of Métis political organizations centred largely on attaining a Métis land base and securing access to medical care and education. For First Nations groups, on the other hand, concerns over proper treaty implementation became the major focus for many political organizers. As a result, this discussion of the treaties will largely focus on the Saskatchewan First Nations.

Before elucidating the role of treaties in the rise of First Nations activism, perhaps a quick history of the treaties will prove useful. The western treaties were a product of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's National Policy which focussed on opening up the west for agricultural development. By the mid-nineteenth century, the threat of American expansion into the north was real, and the Dominion government wanted to secure Canada's presence in the west to prevent

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<sup>41</sup> This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of every factor that may have contributed to the political movement from 1922-1946, but rather, is meant to detail some of the major factors. Further, while the issues causing political revival for the First Nations and Métis do not directly coincide, I believe they are comparable, and therefore I will attempt to address both groups within this chapter.

<sup>42</sup> Rene Fumoleau, *As Long as this Land Shall Last: A History of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, 1870-1939* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975), 58.

American incursion. To accomplish this, Macdonald felt it was necessary to expand settlement to the west via a national railway. Before proceeding with these expansionist plans, however, Macdonald needed to secure title to western lands that were occupied by First Nations groups. The precedents set by previous Imperial land policies, however, posed a challenge to this plan.

Although the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which outlined the regulations for the transfer of land from the Native groups to the Dominion, informed previous treaty agreements in eastern Canada, in the west, the prairie numbered treaties were heavily influenced by the Robinson Treaties of 1850. The Robinson Treaties, named for Commissioner William Robinson, were negotiated in response to First Nations and Métis dissatisfaction with Canada's decision to lease Ojibway land to mining companies without the consent of the First Nation.<sup>43</sup> The resulting treaties, the Robinson Superior and Robinson Huron Treaties of 1850, provided the Ojibway with "a share of revenues from the exploitation of resources in their territories, and annuities, or cash payments, which were to increase as revenues increased. Reservations of land for the Ojibway were also secured, as were traditional and commercial hunting, fishing and harvesting in their traditional territories."<sup>44</sup> Many of these provisions, most notably annuities, reservations and the right to traditional economic pursuits, were adopted in the negotiations of the prairie treaties.

Following the general framework of the Robinson Treaties, the western treaties were negotiated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The western treaty process was aided by the eagerness of the western First Nations and Métis populations to negotiate with the Dominion. The decline of the buffalo had left the Plains First Nations and the Métis without food or a way to make a living, and other economic industries, such as the fur trade, were slowing down

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<sup>43</sup> Hon. David M. Arnot, *Statement of Treaty Issues: Treaties as a Bridge to the Future* (Saskatoon: Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 1998), 18.

<sup>44</sup> Arnot, 18.

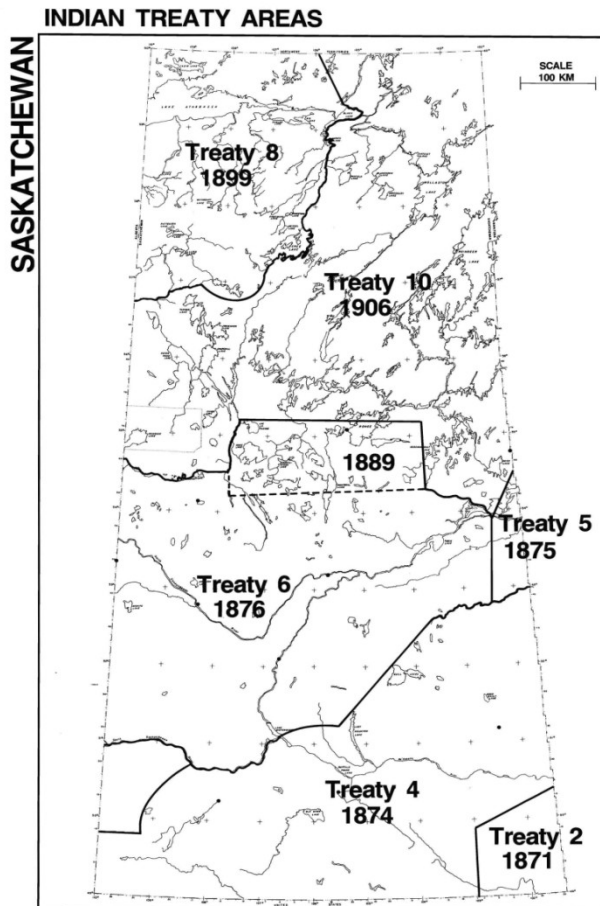
considerably. Faced with starvation and disease, many of the chiefs of Saskatchewan First Nations groups believed that the best option to secure the wellbeing of future generations would be to negotiate with the Dominion for economic protection.<sup>45</sup> And while the need for such protection was widespread, the government was not willing to provide treaty agreements to all First Nations groups, but rather only addressed First Nations living in areas which were of value to the Dominion. Following Macdonald's National Policy, valuable lands were those deemed suitable for agricultural development. In outlying districts, such as the provincial north, however, the Dominion was content to ignore calls for treaties until the government needed access to such lands.<sup>46</sup>

Figure 1.1 Map of Saskatchewan Treaty Areas.

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<sup>45</sup> John L. Tobias, "The Origins of the Treaty Movement in Saskatchewan," in *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition*, eds. F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1986), 242.

<sup>46</sup> Along with choosing to address treaty concerns based solely on the agricultural needs of the government, the Dominion also chose to address Métis concerns differently than those of the First Nations. Instead of arranging for access to Métis land through treaties, the Dominion offered the Métis, in some cases, a choice between entering treaty as Indians, or scrip payments. The result of this policy was that the Métis either chose to identify as, and be treated as an Indian, or maintained their Métis identity, and were given compensation for their land through a onetime payment of scrip.



Source: *The Canadian Atlas of Aboriginal Settlement* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute of Métis Studies and Applied Research, 1994), 15.

The western treaties reveal the basis for the economic relationship forged between the Dominion and First Nations groups. The treaties outlined agreed upon terms of reserve allocations, access to natural resources, provisions for food, medical care and education, which were designed to continue on uninterrupted through the Depression era. The treaties are essential to consider in this study because they have become the context for much of the confusion and dissatisfaction of both Natives and non-Natives in regards to Aboriginal rights to land, agricultural pursuits, hunting, trapping and fishing rights and self-governance.

According to Helen Buckley's work, *From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare: Why Indian Policy Failed in the Prairie Provinces*, "getting the farming established was the second main element in the government's plan."<sup>47</sup> As a result, treaty terms reflected the Canadian government's desire for First Nations groups to become sedentary farmers. The exception to this was Treaty No. 2, which was negotiated in 1871 and covered the south-eastern corner of the province. In the written terms of the treaty, provisions for reserves, annuities and schools were made, yet there was no mention of agricultural implements or hunting, trapping and fishing rights as in the other treaties.<sup>48</sup> According to the signatories of the treaty, however, the written terms of the agreement do not necessarily reflect what was verbally promised to the groups. As a result, what have been termed "outside promises" have long been a source of contention. "Outside promises" refer to terms which were discussed and verbally agreed upon by both the government and First Nations parties at the treaty negotiations, but were not included in the official treaty documentation.<sup>49</sup> Present in Treaties Nos. 1 and 2, these "outside promises" are significant as certain farming implements had been verbally promised to the First Nations groups, yet were not delivered.<sup>50</sup>

In the other southern treaties, however, agricultural provisions were officially included in the treaty terms, which reflected the government's agriculturally minded goals. Treaty No. 4 which was negotiated in 1874 and covered the southern portion of the province that was best known for agricultural potential, included provisions for reserves, annuities and schools, as well as

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<sup>47</sup> Helen Buckley, *From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare: Why Indian Policy Failed in the Prairie Provinces* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 51.

<sup>48</sup> Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 220-222.

<sup>49</sup> Ray et al., 81.

<sup>50</sup> According to Ray et al., the significance of the issues of "Outside Promises" lies in the tension between the letter of the treaty and the spirit and intent of the treaty. First Nations groups hold that the written words of the treaty do not necessarily reflect the true spirit and intentions of the agreement. Because the treaty negotiations were spiritual and ceremonial, there were often aspects of the agreement that were understood by both parties but were not recorded. Further, it is believed that many of the terms that had been recorded require interpretation. Ray et al., 81-86. This dispute regarding the "outside promises" was settled in 1875.

agricultural implements and hunting, trapping and fishing rights.<sup>51</sup> The Cree and Saulteaux Nations involved in Treaty No. 4, also known as the Qu'Appelle Treaty, were generally concerned with meeting economic needs as circumstances on the prairies changed. Similar concerns motivated the Swampy Cree in the Treaty No. 5 area and the Plains Cree and Willow Cree of Treaty No. 6 to negotiate for a treaty, and in 1875 and 1876 respectively, Commissioner Alexander Morris met with the First Nations. Although Treaty No. 5 was negotiated due to a lack of employment available for First Nations with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), agricultural provisions were granted along with hunting, trapping and fishing rights.

Within Treaty No. 6 the agricultural provisions granted were the most generous of the treaties. This is indicative not only of the most practical economic vocations in the area covered by the treaty, as Treaty No. 6 covered a large portion of the fertile plains, but the agricultural terms also reflected the changing economic needs of First Nations peoples after the disappearance of the buffalo in the late 1870s. In fact, Buckley argued that once the treaties were negotiated and promises of agricultural aid were made, First Nations groups in agriculturally viable areas were generally eager to begin farming.<sup>52</sup> Despite this interest, however, First Nations agricultural policies were designed to promote a type of subsistence farming that did not allow for commercialization. The permit system, for instance, required First Nations farmers to secure written permission from the Indian agent or farm instructor to sell their crops or buy new implements. As a result, many First Nations turned away from agriculture and instead became wage labourers.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ray et al., 225-226.

<sup>52</sup> Buckley, 53-54.

<sup>53</sup> Buckley, 53-54.

In contradiction to Buckley's claim that First Nations groups turned away from farming during the Depression, the Department of Indian Affairs *Annual Reports* claimed that the principal occupation for Indians in Saskatchewan was mixed farming and stockraising.<sup>54</sup> A quick glance at the tabular statements at the end of each *Annual Report* reveals, however, that, in general, First Nations groups made more money through hunting and trapping than they did through agriculture.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps this contradiction can be explained by remembering the goals of the Department concerning First Nations people. The Department was dedicated to 'civilizing' First Nations and turning them into self-supporting individuals. Agriculture was viewed as a crucial part of this plan, whereas hunting and trapping were deemed backward economies that discouraged improvement. Therefore, it is plausible that the Department would attempt to portray Native success in activities deemed important under the Department's goals.

Nevertheless, Buckley is convincing in her assertion that Department policies which were designed to ensure the success of First Nations farming constituted the majority of the problems. Along with refusing to allow First Nations to succeed at commercial farming enterprises, the Department also allowed areas of reserve land to be leased out to non-Natives for use. Policies such as these were evidence that the Department had abandoned its plan for First Nations farming.<sup>56</sup> By the 1930s, First Nations leader John Tootoosis expressed contempt for the agricultural policies of the Department. Speaking to the efforts of First Nations to succeed at farming, Tootoosis insisted that men were "completely defeated, not so much by drought and poverty as by the system."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Canada, *Department of Indian Affairs Report*, 1930, 39.

<sup>55</sup> Canada, *Department of Indian Affairs Report*, 1930, 39.

<sup>56</sup> Buckley, 57.

<sup>57</sup> Buckley, 58.

In the north, however, the situation differed significantly. While agriculture remained a somewhat feasible option in the south, in the north, hunting, trapping and fishing were the major economic pursuits. First Nations and Métis in the north, as a result, were still living according to more traditional practices and for the most part, spoke Cree or Dene.<sup>58</sup> For these northerners, treaty promises regarding hunting, trapping and fishing rights were crucial, as northern Natives hoped such promises would guard against the depletion of wildlife due to increased non-Native hunting.<sup>59</sup> Treaties Nos. 8 and 10 covered the largest portions of the northern boreal region where agriculture was not viable, and though agricultural implements were offered in the agreements, the terms for hunting, trapping and fishing were of increased importance. According to the treaty, the First Nations included in the agreement,

have the right to pursue their avocations of hunting, trapping, and fishing throughout the tract surrendered, subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by the Government of the country acting under the authority of Her Majesty and saving and excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, or other purposes under grant or other right given by Her Majesty's said Government.<sup>60</sup>

The above clause, which was present in all of the Saskatchewan treaties except Treaty No. 2, left room for the government to impose restrictions on the hunting, trapping and fishing rights of the First Nations, and became a major source of debate between First Nations and governments.

While the treaties in the south were negotiated with great expediency, reflective of the Dominion's interest in agricultural land, the treaties in the north were slower to come. The Department held that the northern populations during the 1870s were better left to their traditional

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<sup>58</sup> Dobbin, "Métis Struggles of the Twentieth Century", 18.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Dodson and the Elders of Birch Narrows, Buffalo River, Canoe Lake and English River, *In Their Own Land" Treaty Ten and the Canoe Lake, Clear Lake, and English River Bands* (Saskatoon: Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2006), 1.

<sup>60</sup> Ray et al., 226.



pursuits, and therefore, no attempt was made to negotiate treaties with them. While the government was not interested in commencing treaty negotiations in the north, the First Nations populations of this region began pushing for an agreement in the late nineteenth century. Interested in attaining the benefits granted to other First Nations bands through treaties, the First Nations and Métis groups in the Treaty No. 10 area of the north began to petition for a treaty in 1879.<sup>61</sup>

By this time, not only were the subsistence economies of the First Nations and Métis populations beginning to falter as a result of falling fur prices and the decreasing game populations,<sup>62</sup> but both the First Nations and Métis populations were seeking compensation for their aboriginal rights.<sup>63</sup> But, “the slower pace of economic development in the north, and the low priority assigned to the region in the federal government’s development plans ensured that native desires would be regularly ignored and that the treaty process would remain under the control of the federal government.”<sup>64</sup> For the Cree and Dene populations of the Treaty No. 8 region, the government was content to ignore calls for treaty until gold was discovered in the Klondike in 1897.<sup>65</sup> The hostility caused by the rapid influx of non-Native miners into Native lands however, created a pressing need for a treaty.

For the First Nations of the Treaty No. 10 region, it would not be until officials from the HBC, along with Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries urged the government to take action to ease the destitution and suffering of the northern populations that any serious consideration regarding a treaty was made. According to historians Kenneth Coates and William Morrison, the creation of Saskatchewan in 1905 further pressured the stalemate between northern populations

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<sup>61</sup> Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison for Treaties and Historical Research Centre, *Treaty Research Report: Treaty 10 (1906)* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1986), 14.

<sup>62</sup> Coates and Morrison, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Coates and Morrison, i.

<sup>64</sup> Coates and Morrison, 13.

<sup>65</sup> Arnot, 24.

and the federal government. By this time, the federal government had hoped to “formalize its responsibilities on aboriginal matters,” but argued that the limited economic potential of the northern areas justified the extension of less generous terms to the Native populations in the treaty area.<sup>66</sup>

Additionally, the government was not concerned with altering the lifestyles of First Nations and Métis groups in the north, as they were in the negotiation of treaties in the south, and therefore, northern Natives were encouraged to continue hunting and trapping. A further diversion in the government’s treatment of the northern First Nations could be seen in the enforcement of reserve settlements which, unlike the south, were slow to be established.<sup>67</sup> In the north, First Nations were leery of the reserve system and feared that being forced into restrictive settlements would threaten their traditional hunting, trapping and fishing economies. Although both treaties contained provisions for setting aside reserves, it was left as an option to be exercised later.<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, government attitudes towards treaty negotiations ensured that the Dominion would be forced to be involved in two separate treaty making periods—one in the late nineteenth century, and one in the early twentieth.

Since the treaties in Saskatchewan provided the basis on which First Nations rights to land, resources and relief were granted, over time First Nations groups felt these agreements were not being properly fulfilled. The treaty promises quickly became a source of discontent amongst First Nations communities and further provided a reason for renewed political organization. The promises outlined in the treaties became a source of contention for First Nations people almost as soon as the treaties were completed, but it is fair to say that conditions worsened throughout the

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<sup>66</sup> Coates and Morrison, 27.

<sup>67</sup> Coates and Morrison, 57.

<sup>68</sup> Arnot, 26.

Depression. With the disappointment of both southern and northern First Nations in the implementation of their treaty rights, it is easy to understand how such frustration could lead to political movement.

The dissatisfaction with treaty implementation was further exacerbated by declining economic circumstances in the late 1920s. While discussions of the Great Depression in Canada typically elicit images of dust storms stretching across the dry barren prairies, destitute farmers and unemployed single men riding the rails in search of jobs or relief, these images are usually not translated to the Native population. In fact, not only are reflections of the Depression generally reserved for the non-Native population, but perhaps, even more specifically, they are largely applied to non-Native prairie dwellers. The notion that Native populations were affected at all by the Depression is generally overlooked.<sup>69</sup> After all, the federal government was responsible for the wellbeing of the First Nations communities of Saskatchewan, while the Métis, under the care of the provincial governments, were assumed to be receiving aid like the rest of the non-Native population. It is logical, then, to assume that the conditions of these groups would remain unaffected by declining economic circumstances, and it should not be surprising that the First Nations and Métis populations of Saskatchewan remained largely out of the minds of the non-Native Canadians.

The economic failure that rampaged through the province in the 1930s was serious, and the provincial and federal governments were ill equipped to address the situation. As the Depression deepened, and government inaction and frugality became standard practice, those who needed the help of the governments most in actuality received very little. In response to inadequate

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<sup>69</sup> The issues of the Regina *Leader-Post* from October 1929 to December 1933 detail how the Depression had affected the non-Native population, but Natives are rarely mentioned.

government policies, therefore, farmers, unemployed single men and Native populations began to agitate for better treatment.

While the political organization of prairie farmers and the working class have been discussed at length by Canadian historians, the political situation of Saskatchewan Native populations throughout this era requires further discussion.<sup>70</sup> The inclusion of the political activities of Saskatchewan Natives in the discussion of non-Native social and political movements helps to illustrate the place Native populations held within the greater social discord. The political organization that developed throughout this era, therefore, did not occur in isolation but was influenced by the social and political mood of the country.

The stock market crash of 1929, paired with fluctuating drought conditions in Saskatchewan, ensured that very few people in the province would escape the wrath of economic devastation. Nevertheless, the situation of the Native populations in Saskatchewan was often ignored or trivialized by newspapers, the general public and even the Department of Indian Affairs. Although the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, wrote in 1930 that, “The Indians in common with other sections of the population have felt the effects of the prevailing lack of employment and low prices for agricultural products,” Department officials argued that conditions were far worse for non-Natives.<sup>71</sup> The 1931 report read,

On the whole, however, it may be said that the change for the worse in their economic position is relatively less marked than among the white population, as they live for the most part on reserves in isolated communities, and are free from taxation. In the majority of

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<sup>70</sup> For more information on labour movements see, Victor Howard, *We Were the Salt of the Earth: a Narrative of the On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1985); Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: the On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Calgary: Fifth House Publishing, 2003); Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House Publishing, 2005);

<sup>71</sup> Canada, *Report of the Deputy Superintendent General*, (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty), December 18, 1930, 7.

cases, moreover, Indians own their habitations free from encumbrance and do not pay rent. Education and medical attendance are provided for them by the Government. Thus their absolute necessary expenses are practically reduced to food and clothing.<sup>72</sup>

The comparisons made in this report between the welfare of First Nations and that of the non-Native populations certainly downplayed the seriousness of the economic conditions on reserves, yet the report also touched on one of the major issues facing the non-Native individuals in Saskatchewan –that of taxation and housing costs. This issue is also addressed in the November 12, 1932 issue of the *Regina Leader-Post* which reported on a large group of Saskatchewan farmers and workers who met at City Hall in Regina in hopes of being allowed to work off their outstanding taxes.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, however, while the housing situations of the non-Natives were important, and should have been addressed, several issues concerning the welfare of Native populations in Saskatchewan were overlooked in favour of reporting the situation of non-Natives.

What is not mentioned in the 1931 report, for example, is that while First Nations did not have to pay taxes or housing costs and were only responsible for providing for food and clothing, the scarcity of opportunities for employment on reserves made providing even the most basic costs of living difficult. Economist Helen Buckley has argued convincingly that,

Not many reserves enjoy a situation where regular employment is available in sufficient quantity, or where there is a combination of employment and traditional pursuits that permits the people, by and large, to be self-supporting. They are basically small communities, most with fewer than a thousand people and many numbering in the low hundreds or even less, yet the resource base is usually smaller still...Some locations are remote from jobs of any kind; some are

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<sup>72</sup> Canada, *Report of the Deputy Superintendent General* (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty), November 1, 1931, 7.

<sup>73</sup> "Want to work to pay taxes: 100 register at city hall to work for payments; 100 others get forms," *Regina Leader-Post*, November 12, 1932, 3.

close enough to town or industry for people to get work, provided town employers will hire them.<sup>74</sup>

Along with these conditions, the types of employment secured by First Nations groups tended to produce lower wages than the jobs taken by non-Natives, meaning that any reduction in employment would have been devastating. For Native populations, whose conditions even during times of affluence, were far below the standard of living of non-Natives, the decline in income during the Depression would have been, in fact, more serious.

To illustrate the dramatic loss of income among First Nations groups in agriculture, the *Annual Reports* of the Department of Indian Affairs between 1930 and 1936 revealed a steady drop in the value of farm products (including hay), the value of beef sold and used for food, and the wages earned through these pursuits. Table 1.1 illustrates the reduction faced by the Saskatchewan First Nations population.

Table 1.1 Agricultural Revenues, 1930-1936.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Value of Farm Products Including Hay</b>	<b>Value of Beef Sold And Used For Food</b>	<b>Wages earned</b>
1930	433,884	92,269	102,247
1931	278,522	70,679	98,876
1932	231,600	57,184	67,564
1933	211,046	49,475	55,724
1934	267,717	37,932	49,191
1935	249,515	43,040	46,878
1936	246,721	48,468	43,744

<sup>74</sup> Buckley, 7.

<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,919,005</b>	<b>399,047</b>	<b>464,224</b>
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Data from *Annual Reports*, Department of Indian Affairs, 1930-1936.

While some slight increases can be seen in this table from year to year, a general decline in First Nations agriculture is apparent. In fact, these figures reflect a total decline of forty-three percent in the value of farm products, forty-seven and a half percent in the value of beef sold and used for food and fifty-seven percent in wages earned between 1930 and 1936. While this decline is numerically much less than the seventy-two percent decline cited for non-Native farmers,<sup>75</sup> it must be remembered that Native peoples typically had a lower standard of living as compared to non-Natives, even in times of prosperity. Thus, even a slight drop in income would have magnified the suffering already present in Native communities, and would have been comparable to the impressive declines felt by non-Natives. Considering the combination of this drop in income with already low wages and declining relief payments, the Department's argument that the non-Native populations suffered more than the First Nations throughout this era is unfair.<sup>76</sup>

What is more, although we typically associate the majority of the Depression woes with agriculture and urban industry, the *Annual Reports* also revealed the volatility of northern hunting and trapping. The 1930 report, for example, detailed the concern the Department had for the hunting, fishing and trapping Indians in the northern and outlying areas. According to the report, the increase of white trappers in these areas, paired with the extreme hunting practices used by these non-Native trappers, had caused greater competition for increasingly scarce resources.<sup>77</sup> This

<sup>75</sup> According to historian Bill Waiser, per capita income in Saskatchewan declined 72% between 1928 and 1933. Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House Publishing, 2005), 282.

<sup>76</sup> For more on Depression era circumstances for Saskatchewan First Nations see Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 284-285.

<sup>77</sup> Non-Native hunting practices were extreme in that hunters often used poisons to kill of animals, and/or slaughtered high numbers of animals for sport. These practices and others are discussed at length in the Department reports and in the Game correspondence. Canada. *Department of Indian Affairs Report*, 1930, 7; Canada, RG10, Volume 6731, File 420-1, Reel C-8093, *Application of Game Laws to the Indians in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, 1915-1939*.

encroachment on Native hunting territories was significant, as one-third of the First Nations population relied on hunting, trapping and fishing in this era.<sup>78</sup> Supporting the claims of the *Annual Reports* which emphasized a failure of hunting and trapping in these districts, in his work, *'Enough to Keep Them Alive': Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965*, professor of social work Hugh Shewell has claimed the incomes of northern Saskatchewan populations fell sixty-six percent from 1924 to 1935. Supporting the information found in the *Annual Reports*, Shewell has contended that,

The drop in northern Indian income was precipitated by several related factors in the inter-war years: increased competition among the fur companies, the rapid incursion of white trappers, and the depletion of fur-bearing animals and resulting conservation measures. In addition, the fur trade was—like the rest of the economy during this period—subject to many regional, national, and international fluctuations in production, price, and volume of sales.<sup>79</sup>

Along with this massive decline, First Nations groups in the north were further subjected to a cut in relief payments at roughly the same time period. According to a table from the 1936-37 *Annual Report* of the Department of Mines and Resources,<sup>80</sup> analyzed in Shewell's work, non-Native per capita relief doubled that received by First Nations in 1932 and 1934, and by 1936, that gap had increased even further to triple the relief provided to First Nations.<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, the Department was not overly sympathetic to the problems of declining relief payments. In fact, in September 1932, Acting Deputy Superintendent General A.S. Williams wrote in a circular to the Indian Agents that some Indians had been receiving relief payments despite having also been

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<sup>78</sup> John Leonard Taylor, *Canadian Indian Policy During the Interwar Years, 1918-1939* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1983), 51.

<sup>79</sup> Hugh Shewell, *'Enough to Keep Them Alive': Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 124. Also see LAC, RG 10, Vol.6731, File 420-1, Reel C-8093, Memorandum to the Deputy Superintendent General, Co-Relation of GAME, FUR & FORESTS with Indian Livelihood. From the Supervisor of Indian Timber Lands, Lands and Timber Branch, July 7, 1926, 1-2.

<sup>80</sup> In 1936 the Department of Indian Affairs became part of the Department of Mines and Resources.

<sup>81</sup> Shewell, 123; James Struthers, "Great Depression," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*; Department of Mines and Resources, Indian Affairs Branch, *Annual Report*, 1936-1937, 194.



outfitted for hunting by the trading companies.<sup>82</sup> This “duplication of food issue” was seen as unacceptable by the Department as it undermined the attempts of the government to train Indians to be self-supporting. The dominant belief, implicit in Department correspondence, was that First Nations groups should not possess anything more than they needed to survive.

According to the attitudes of the Department, and the rest of the Canadian governments for that matter, all able-bodied people (Native and non-Native) should be self-supporting and relief should only be provided to those who were unable to support themselves due to age or illness.<sup>83</sup> While this policy was clearly in tune with the general attitudes of Canadians during this era, a refusal to allow relief provisions for First Nations hunters in light of the knowledge that hunting and trapping potential in the north was declining, seems callous. The irony of Canadian Indian policy in this regard is obvious. The Department claimed to advocate the self-sufficiency of First Nations groups, yet the policies of the Department were counterproductive to this goal. By disallowing any form of First Nations commercial economies either in hunting, trapping or agriculture, the Department ensured that the First Nations would remain unmotivated and reliant on relief.<sup>84</sup>

The Department’s paradoxical attitudes regarding the seriousness of the Depression, and subsequent relief policies, largely reflected the views on economy and work ethic held by most Canadians during this era. According to historian James Struthers, because Canada was familiar with waves of unemployment and seasonal job fluctuations, Canadians in the 1930s assumed that the market would soon correct itself, and affluence would return. No one could have predicted the unprecedented economic decline that occurred throughout the 1930s, and because politicians

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<sup>82</sup> LAC, RG 10, Vol.6731, File 420-1, Reel C-8093, letter to Indian Agents from Acting Deputy Superintendent General, A.S. Williams, September 28, 1932.

<sup>83</sup> LAC, RG 10, Vol. 6731, File 420-1, Reel C-8093, letter to Indian Agents from Acting Deputy Superintendent General, A.S. Williams.

<sup>84</sup> LAC, RG 10, Vol.6731, File 420-1, Reel C-8093, letter from D.C. Scott, May 30, 1931.

maintained the same attitudes towards joblessness that had been held in the past, the depressed economic situation was not properly acknowledged or rectified.<sup>85</sup> Instead it was assumed that the unemployed were not simply victims of circumstance, but were lazy and responsible for their own hardship.

Governments, as a result, offered little in the way of relief for those who truly needed it. Unemployment and dependence on the charity of others came with a major social stigma, and the policies that emerged during the Depression era reflected these attitudes. In fact, to avoid creating a system of welfare dependence, the federal and provincial governments maintained strict relief policies during the 1930s which were designed to encourage relief recipients to improve their status. As economist Kenneth Norris and historian Douglas Owsen, aptly stated, “there was a widespread feeling that relief systems would only encourage indigence unless they were made as basic and rudimentary as possible.”<sup>86</sup>

In the years preceding the advent of a welfare state, churches, private charities and family members were charged with the responsibility of caring for the destitute, and the government insisted that its part in addressing the situation would be minimal at best. As a result, a residency requirement of six months for applications for direct relief was implemented in most municipalities, and, further, applicants were required to prove their state of need before being granted relief. In most areas this meant that families could have no savings, no automobile, no telephone or other such ‘trivial’ expenses, and further, individuals must prove that they had exhausted the charity of family and community members. This process was not only degrading, but

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<sup>85</sup> James Struthers, “Canadian Unemployment Policy in the 1930s” in *Readings in Canadian History: Post-Confederation*. Vol.2, fourth ed. Eds. R. Douglas Francis and Donald B. Smith. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, Canada, 1994), 376. See also, Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 282-285.

<sup>86</sup> Kenneth Norris and Douglas Owsen, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company Canada Ltd., 1996), 370.

required the complete surrender of individual privacy to the relief commissioner. In the end, if it was deemed that the applicants were eligible for relief, the allocation of relief vouchers, or in rare cases cash payments which barely covered the bare necessities were granted.<sup>87</sup> As the Depression deepened, however, and people began to grasp the seriousness of the situation, the federal government was forced to adjust its policies slightly. Relief projects, better rations and more substantial direct relief provisions were granted in a joint effort by the federal and provincial or municipal governments to ease the suffering, but in many instances this was not enough to make much of a difference.

The government did not fully abandon its hard-line stance on relief, but later Department reports insisted that the Department assisted all destitute First Nations groups throughout the province according to their varied economic needs. For the prairie First Nations in the south, for example, the Department recorded that “an intensive plan of agricultural assistance and instruction” had been introduced after the disappearance of the buffalo, leading to better circumstances among Native farmers.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, in the northern regions, while the Department insisted the hunting Indians “are maintaining themselves quite comfortably according to their own native standards of living,” to further ensure that the Department was doing all it could for the Native populations, Department officials insisted that no legitimate appeal for relief would be ignored.<sup>89</sup>

By 1934 the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs reported a marked improvement in the welfare of both the hunting and trapping First Nations in the north, as well as with the agricultural and stock-raising groups of the plains. In the same report, however, there was

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<sup>87</sup> James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 72-73).

<sup>88</sup> Canada, *Report of the Deputy Superintendent General*, November 1, 1931, 7.

<sup>89</sup> Canada, *Report of the Deputy Superintendent General*, August 31, 1933, 7.

recognition of the problems in wage labour, as a less than positive report was made regarding First Nations individuals employed in industrial wage labour jobs. According to the report, the process of the re-employment of Native workers who lost their jobs during the Depression was expected to be slow, as employers would likely favour re-hiring non-Native workers before Native employees.<sup>90</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed in the 1936 report which insisted that there was “a tendency on the part of employers of labour to refuse employment to Indians considering that they are a public charge and it is not necessary to give them employment when there are white applications for the job.”<sup>91</sup> In the end not only were First Nations populations just as affected by declining economic circumstances in Saskatchewan during the Depression as non-Natives, but contrary to popular opinion, the aid First Nations received was often subpar.

The conditions of the First Nations populations were far from ideal, but according to Donald McLean the suffering of the Métis in Saskatchewan was much worse. Unlike the First Nations, the Métis were not recognized by the *Indian Act*, and therefore, were not under the charge of the Department of Indian Affairs. In addition, unlike the First Nations, the Métis had not signed treaties with the Dominion and therefore, were unable to secure relief provisions from the Department.<sup>92</sup> Instead, provided for by the provincial government, McLean contends that many Métis communities in Saskatchewan did not have medical services or schools, and further, that many members of the population lived on relief. In this respect, McLean argues, “the situation of these Métis was more desperate than that of the Treaty Indians whose contracts [First Nations’ Treaty agreements] with the government had given them some limited security.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Canada, *Report of the Deputy Superintendent General*, July 11, 1934, 8.

<sup>91</sup> Canada, *Report of the Deputy Superintendent General*, July 1, 1936, 10.

<sup>92</sup> During the negotiations of several western treaties, the Métis were given the option of being included in the treaty negotiations, and therefore being considered as Indians, or maintaining their Métis identity, and taking scrip. Fumoleau, 58.

<sup>93</sup> Donald McLean, *Home From the Hill: a History of the Métis in Western Canada* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, 1988), 249.

For the Métis living in Saskatchewan, life had been difficult since the disappearance of the buffalo and the defeat of the Métis in 1885. Prior to this time Métis held prominent places in the fur trade and also benefitted from the lucrative buffalo hunt. Near the end of the nineteenth century, however, several factors combined to devastate the Métis nation. The disappearance of the buffalo and decreasing influence of the fur trade undermined the economic strength of the Métis. Still further, the defeat of the Métis at Batoche in 1885 ensured that the once prominent nation would disperse with the onslaught of incoming settlers. No longer able to maintain their political control and distinct national status, the Métis became a colonized people without a land base to procure economic stability.<sup>94</sup> In the face of these political and economic challenges, many Métis chose to move north and become nomadic hunters and trappers, or turned to First Nations reserves around the province.<sup>95</sup>

In central and southern Saskatchewan, the Métis were largely excluded from agriculture due to a lack of an independent land base, and as a result, very few Métis in the south became farmers. Instead, the majority came to rely on wage labour and social assistance for their survival.<sup>96</sup> Like First Nations labourers, Métis workers faced increasing challenges to secure employment during this economic crisis. Non-Native employers often avoided employing Métis workers, instead favouring non-Natives for job opportunities. In the north, life was not much better. For those still living the semi-nomadic lifestyle of hunter and trapper, increased game depletion and competition with non-Native hunters and trappers made securing adequate resources difficult.

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<sup>94</sup> Wesley Budd, *History of Métis Organizations of Saskatchewan* Unpublished work written for the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research and Curriculum Development, Saskatoon. Available at the Virtual Museum of Métis History <[www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)>, accessed October 2, 2007.

<sup>95</sup> Julia D. Harrison, *Métis: People Between Two Worlds* (Vancouver: The Glenbow-Alberta Institute in association with Douglas & McIntyre, 1995), 94.

<sup>96</sup> Murray Dobbin, "Métis Struggles of the Twentieth Century: The Saskatchewan Métis Society—1935-1950. Part One: Early Beginnings," *New Breed Magazine*, 1978, 16-17.

Further, like non-Native hunters, trappers and fishermen, the Métis were required to purchase permits and were subject to the same game laws.

The meagre economies Métis came to rely upon were rarely sufficient to ensure their survival. To supplement any income they could obtain, therefore, the Métis often had to seek social assistance from the municipalities. Though relief was common for the Métis, during the Depression, according to Dobbin, many of the municipalities refused relief to Métis families because they had always been too poor to pay taxes.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, historian Bill Waiser has proposed that during this era Métis families near Prince Albert relocated to the city in hopes of collecting relief and that “this survival strategy was a natural response for a people who had known only poverty since the early twentieth century.”<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately this attempt to maintain a decent standard of living was not appreciated by the non-Native populations and caused a great deal of tension.

According to a 2004 interview of noted Métis activist Jim Sinclair, the desperate conditions of the Saskatchewan Métis in the Depression were vital in the development of political organization. Sinclair insisted:

Poverty was the driving force because again, we were very, very poor. We were not recognized by any government. We couldn't go to school because at that time we weren't paying taxes because of the road allowance. We couldn't benefit from housing because they wouldn't put a house on the road allowance. So, therefore our people had a struggle of being on the outside of the system...<sup>99</sup>

This idea that the development of organized forms of Métis activism in Saskatchewan was largely the result of poor economic circumstances is further supported by Métis activist, Frank

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<sup>97</sup> Dobbin, “Métis Struggles of the Twentieth Century,” 19.

<sup>98</sup> Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 290.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte, April 17, 2004. Available at the Virtual Museum of Métis History, <[www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)>, accessed January 12, 2008.

Tomkins,<sup>100</sup> when he argued that the potency of the Métis movement declined with the onset of the Second World War. Tomkins has proposed that because so many Métis people joined the armed forces, they had access to regular wages which lessened their poverty. As a result, there was less interest in political organizations designed to protest poor conditions.<sup>101</sup> Certainly the beginning of better times in Canada in the 1940s did not magically end the suffering and poverty of the Métis communities, but perhaps more accurately, the return of prosperity distracted those capable of organizing or being involved in the movement. The fact that Métis activism was heightened during periods of unprecedented scarcity supports the idea that poverty was the major driving force behind Métis political organization.

Poverty and scarcity of resources was similarly a factor for political galvanization in the north as well. The tendency to overlook the needs of northern Native populations, which began in the late nineteenth century during the negotiations of the western treaties, persisted well into the 1930s. Although treaties had been negotiated across the northern areas of the province by this time, much confusion remained as to what these treaties meant for the economic rights of First Nations populations. Consequently, as the northern areas of the province began to see an influx of economic development in the beginning of the twentieth century, the question of Native rights within these once remote areas became increasingly difficult to ignore. As a resource hinterland, the north increasingly drew the interest of both resource extraction companies and non-Native individuals interested in making a living hunting, trapping and fishing. As a result of this incursion into the north, the need to control the harvesting of resources increased, leading to the enforcement of provincial game laws by Game Guardians and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

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<sup>100</sup> Frank Tomkins is the son of well known Métis activist, Pete Tomkins, who was instrumental in early Métis activities in Alberta.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Mike Mercredi, Frank Tomkins and Ron Laliberte, January 24-25, 2004. Available at the Virtual Museum of Métis History, <[www.metismetis.museum.ca](http://www.metismetis.museum.ca)>, accessed February 17, 2008.

With this augmented enforcement of resource regulations, the question of whether provincial game laws applied to First Nations populations arose. According to First Nations groups, their right to hunt, fish and trap in northern Saskatchewan had been guaranteed by the treaties, and therefore could not be controlled by Provincial forces.<sup>102</sup> Much of the non-Native population, however, felt that regulations needed to be imposed on all hunters, trappers and fishers equally in order to preserve the limited resources. Further, there had been a growing belief amongst the non-Native population that Natives were not making efficient use of their resources and were guilty of slaughtering game for fun.<sup>103</sup> Although no evidence of such slaughter was produced, these rumours nonetheless informed the development of provincial game policies.

As a result of the various concerns and rumours about game usage and preservation circulating around the province, provincial and Department officials were left with the task of deciding how best to regulate resources. After a few years it became clear that few officials, if any, had a decent understanding of the rights of First Nations people in regards to hunting, trapping and fishing. In a series of communications between various Department employees, the confusion about the issue is apparent. After reading the report of W.J. Roche, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in 1917, an unidentified Indian agent responded with puzzlement to the assertion that the treaty rights of Indians were not seen by the department to fully protect their right to hunting, fishing and trapping.<sup>104</sup> The Indian agent asserted,

I can assure you that the report is a great surprise to me, as I have always been under the impression that the right of the Indian to hunt was thoroughly protected under his Treaty. If this is not so it is

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<sup>102</sup> The clauses, which were present with the oral treaty, state that hunting, trapping and fishing rights may be regulated from time to time, yet such regulation was not to come from Provincial authorities, but rather from the Dominion government.

<sup>103</sup> Anthony Gulig, “‘We Beg the Government’: Native People and Game Regulation in Northern Saskatchewan, 1900-1940, *Prairie Forum* 28 no. 1 (Spring 2003): 83.

<sup>104</sup> LAC, RG 10, Vol.6731, File 420-1, Reel C-8093, letter to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, W.J. Roche, from (?), February 6, 1917.



certainly a very serious matter for the Indians living in outlying districts where the land is not fit for farming purposes....I am still of the opinion that this matter is of great enough importance that it ought to be submitted to the Justice Department for an opinion. I think the Indian ought to be protected even if they go to the Supreme Court against Provincial Government. They ought not to be allowed to step in and take away the hunting right from the Indian.<sup>105</sup>

For this agent the issue was clear. Indians had the right to hunt under the provisions of the treaty, and as such must be allowed to maintain this practice because many Indians lived in areas which were not suitable for other economic pursuits. In this letter, the agent even encouraged the Indian hunters to appeal to the Supreme Court to uphold their rights. While this agent seems to be ideological in his insistence that the First Nations in the north fight for their undeniable right to hunt, he also put forward a more practical justification for his beliefs. The agent continued,

...if the Indians are not allowed to hunt for a living they will certainly become a charge upon the Government of Canada. There is no alternative. If you take away their means of living then you will have to provide food and clothing for them, and there is nothing will pauperize the Indian quicker than doing this.<sup>106</sup>

While it is clear that the above mentioned letter fully supported the complete protection of First Nations' hunting rights under the umbrella of treaty agreements, this sentiment was not shared by all. A letter sent to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs by the Chief Game Guardian in Edmonton, Alberta in 1919 revealed the conviction that the hunting, fishing and trapping practices of First Nations individuals should be regulated by provincial game laws in order to ensure the protection of game. Proposing that First Nations be required to purchase hunting, trapping and fishing permits, the Chief Game Guardian suggested that the costs of these permits be refunded to Native populations.

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<sup>105</sup> Letter to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, W.J. Roche.

<sup>106</sup> Letter to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, W.J. Roche.

According to the Game Guardian, the advantage of this program was that the First Nations hunters and trappers would receive the benefits provided by the regulation of game within the province—which would ensure the protection of game from excessive harvesting—yet they would not be forced to incur the cost of a license. By requiring all hunters and trappers to follow the provisions determined by the province, it was hoped that both First Nations and non-Native hunters would be able to continue their work in the future. Unfortunately, what was being overlooked here was the belief by the Native population that they retained the right to hunt, trap and fish, unrestricted by the provincial government.

Despite the opinions of the First Nations populations, however, on March 10, 1919, a Public Notice was issued by the Department, stating that under section 66 of the *Indian Act*, in the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1906, “the laws respecting the protection of game in force in the Provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, shall apply respectively to all Indians and Indian Reserves within the said Provinces, except to the Indians and reserves situated in those portions of the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan comprised within what is known as Treaty No. 8.”<sup>107</sup> This regulation, though misunderstood by various Department officials, as noted above, was justified as permissible by the Department due to specific clauses relating to hunting and trapping that existed in many of the western treaties. The clause, generally speaking, allowed for Indian groups to hunt, trap and fish on their own lands, yet sanctioned restrictions of such privileges to be imposed by the Dominion when they were deemed necessary.

Notwithstanding the attempts by the Department and provincial government to address the convoluted issue of Native hunting and trapping rights within the province, the issue was not resolved in 1919. By 1930 the situation for the Native populations in northern Saskatchewan again

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<sup>107</sup> LAC, RG 10, Vol.6731, File 420-1, Reel C-8093, Letter to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs from Chief Game Guardian in Edmonton, March 4, 1919.

needed to be addressed. According to the reports prepared by the Department between 1930 and 1936, First Nation and Métis hunters and trappers in the north were facing serious economic crises. The control of the natural resources which was transferred to the province in May of 1930 did little to ease the confusion over where Native hunting and trapping rights fell within federal and provincial regulations. According to *An Act Respecting the Transfer of Natural Resources to Saskatchewan (NRTA)*, although the governance of Native people fell under federal jurisdiction, the act outlined the conditions under which Natives would have the right to hunt, trap and fish.

The act, though officially recognizing the right of First Nations groups to hunt, trap and fish for subsistence, nevertheless made provision for the application of provincial game laws when deemed necessary. The reason for this, outlined in section 12 of the act, was to protect the First Nations' access to the provincial game supply. The act read:

In order to secure to the Indians of the Province the continuance of the supply of game and fish for their support and subsistence, Canada agrees that the laws respecting game in force in the Province from time to time shall apply to the Indians within the boundaries thereof, provided, however, that the said Indians shall have the rights, which the Province hereby assures to them, of hunting, trapping and fishing game and fish for food at all seasons of the year on all unoccupied Crown lands and on any other lands to which the said Indians may have a right of access.”<sup>108</sup>

The problems surrounding the *NRTA* largely had to do with the question of which government had the authority to regulate First Nations hunting, trapping and fishing. While it was understood that the federal government was responsible for the First Nations populations in Canada, and that the provinces maintained control over fish and game resources, it was less clear whether the province should control First Nations' access to such resources.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Canada. *An Act Respecting the Transfer of the Natural Resources of Saskatchewan*. 20-21 George V. Chap. 41. Part I-21, 6.

<sup>109</sup> Robert Irwin, “‘A Clear Intention to Effect Such a Modification’: The *NRTA* and Treaty Hunting and Fishing Rights.” *Native Studies Review* 13 no. 2 (2000): 56.

The treaties contained clauses which allow for the regulation of hunting, trapping and fishing rights, yet such regulations were stipulated to only be enforced by the Dominion government. Federal and provincial officials were unsure whether the *NRTA* would constitute a treaty alteration, or would simply be a regulation that would be applied to all First Nations, treaty or non-treaty. Addressing this issue, historian Robert Irwin proposed that

The intent and purpose of the Dominion government in negotiating Section 12, consequently, could be considered a modification of the treaties to include the provinces in the regulatory authorities under treaty, with an important limitation placed upon the regulatory power of the provinces (but not on the Dominion). The right to hunt and fish for food on unoccupied Crown lands becomes a special privilege granted to all Indian peoples and is separate from the treaty right.<sup>110</sup>

If in fact, the *NRTA* was considered a treaty modification, then the Department would have essentially forfeited its ability to protect the treaty hunting, trapping and fishing rights of the First Nations. According to Irwin, however, the Department did not acknowledge the *NRTA* as overriding the rights of the Department to protect First Nations' rights to hunt and trap. Instead, in order to preserve these rights, the Department acted within the constraints of the *Indian Act* and maintained that according to an 1890 amendment to the *Indian Act*, the application of provincial laws to First Nations groups could only occur at the discretion of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs.<sup>111</sup> In this sense, the Department could argue that any regulation of First Nations economic practices stemmed from the *Indian Act* and not the treaties.

This act also granted the right to hunt, trap and fish on lands to which First Nations had access (i.e. Indian reserves), yet did not recognize that these lands were not viable hunting, trapping and fishing grounds. This point was brought up prior to the *NRTA* by Indian Commissioner Hayter

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<sup>110</sup> Irwin, 77.

<sup>111</sup> Irwin, 57-58.

Reed, when he argued that the size and location of reserves were not adequate for supporting the hunting and fishing needs of First Nations during the closed seasons.<sup>112</sup>

Along with outlining the obvious problems in the north regarding hunting and trapping, however, the report also offered a potential solution. This solution, which became the topic of conversation between many Indian Affairs officials, proposed setting aside hunting reserves for the use of Natives only. These reserves would ease the pressure imposed on northern hunting grounds by non-Natives, and further would ensure that Native groups who relied on hunting and trapping for their subsistence, would be able to provide for themselves. The Department made it clear, however, that these reserves were designed strictly for the use of Natives in outlying districts, where there was no opportunity for any other type of employment.<sup>113</sup> Indeed this policy clearly outlined the Department's intention not to encourage the traditional Native economy, but rather, to tolerate it until all geographical areas of the Dominion were developed enough to abolish such vocations. The obvious concern for the condition of Native trappers in the north, though caring on the part of the Department, was also strategic. If the Native populations in the north were unable to make a living using traditional pursuits such as hunting and trapping, the Department would be forced to provide relief.

In the north, Métis groups also played a part in the conflict over resources. Though they did not receive protection of their right to hunt, trap and fish, in the north the Métis lived no differently than the First Nations and remained reliant on game resources. When the province began to regulate the game economies, there was no discussion of whether or not the Métis should be

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<sup>112</sup> Anthony Gulig, "'We Beg the Government', 83. It is interesting to note that despite the Department's recognition that the crisis of game resources in the north largely resulted from the incursion of white hunters and trappers who utilize non-conservationist hunting techniques, the Department remained convinced that Native hunting practices must be regulated as well. LAC, RG 10, Vol.6731, File 420-1, Reel C-8093, "Condition of Hunting Indians in Remote Districts," n.d.

<sup>113</sup> Canada, *Department of Indian Affairs Report*, 1930, 8.

included under the regulations. The Métis were required, along with the non-Native population, to pay for hunting, trapping and fishing permits, and further, the provincial government placed restrictions on their freedom to fish throughout the year.<sup>114</sup> What is more, in order to restrict access to First Nations reserves, the federal government enforced trespassing regulations on the reserves which forced Métis, who had been living as members of families and communities, off the land.<sup>115</sup> This ensured that the Métis would be forced to hunt, trap and fish only in areas that could be regulated by provincial law. The restrictions placed on the Métis during this era reflected a serious blow to the community, especially when, only fifty years prior, Métis fishing rights had been established in Canadian law.<sup>116</sup>

Dissatisfaction with treaty rights, the poor economic conditions of the Depression and the implementation of provincial game regulations were largely responsible for generating increased political organization of the First Nations and Métis. Yet something else was needed to transform this disorganized movement into political organization. Capable leadership and the influence of a wider political movement in Canada were the final requirements for the development of Native political activism between 1922 and 1946. Because a more detailed discussion of First Nations and Métis leadership, political organizations and national political influences will follow in the succeeding chapter, the discussion of the role of Native leaders in the revival of political activism here will be brief.

In the years prior to the 1920s First Nations and Métis individuals generally lacked the knowledge of non-Native social and political processes necessary to mount an organized attack. As Native populations became more familiar with non-Native systems of politics and governance,

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<sup>114</sup> Harrison, 94.

<sup>115</sup> Harrison, 94.

<sup>116</sup> SAB, J.H. Sturdy Papers, M14 file 198, "Métis Conference, 1946," Conference Proceedings, 27.

however, it became increasingly possible for them to act within the Canadian political system to voice their concerns. And most important for the political movement in this era was the emergence of a schooled class of Native peoples.<sup>117</sup> During the interwar period individuals who had attained some form of non-Native education were better positioned to lead their communities into an arena of political activism that was foreign to them. Native leaders began to understand that in order to begin an effective political organization, they needed official recognition from the government. Such recognition required an official declaration of the formation and purposes of the organization which could be stated through a constitution. While the political regulations of the Canadian political structure were not something that the Native populations initially had intimate knowledge of, it became clear that access to non-Native forms of education became key for beginning the process.

Evidence that non-Native education played a role in the capabilities of emerging Native leaders can be seen by simply looking at the educational qualifications of the prominent leaders from this era. Noted Saskatchewan First Nations leaders, the Reverend Canon Edward Ahenakew and John B. Tootoosis, are just two political leaders who had attained western education and went on to direct the political organization of their communities. After beginning his education at Atahkakoop Day School in Sandy Lake, Ahenakew moved on to continue his studies at Emmanuel College Boarding School in Prince Albert until he was eighteen. After teaching at John Smith's Day School for a year Ahenakew attended Wycliffe College in 1905 to study theology. By 1910 he transferred to the Anglican Theological School, Emmanuel College at the University of Saskatchewan, where he remained for two years before graduating with a degree of Licencié in Theology.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> My use of the term education here refers only to western education. I am not intending to make a claim about the status of education of Native people in a traditional sense.

<sup>118</sup> Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1995), xi.

Armed with the belief that he could help his people via his position in the church, Ahenakew remained dedicated to his position in the ministry. By the end of the First World War, however, when a catastrophic influenza outbreak was ravaging First Nations communities, Ahenakew felt that attaining a degree in medicine would allow him to better aid his people. Ahenakew studied towards his degree in medicine at the University of Alberta for three years, but was forced to leave before completing his degree due to illness.<sup>119</sup> Though dedicated first and foremost to the church, Ahenakew nevertheless went on to use his education for the benefit of his people, and became the first president of the League of Indians of Western Canada (LIWC).

Similarly, Tootoosis, who, after the resignation of Ahenakew in 1934, became the president of the LIWC, also attained a non-Native education. Always eager to learn, Tootoosis began his education at Delmas Indian Residential School in 1912 and remained at the school for four years, until he was sixteen years of age and the government would no longer fund his education. Although his formal instruction ended with the residential school, upon returning home Tootoosis carried on his education informally and began teaching himself what he could.<sup>120</sup> While Tootoosis argued in 1932 that the Residential Schools should be closed, he was not denouncing the education of First Nations children, but rather expressing his belief that the system was not conducive to adequate education.<sup>121</sup> Tootoosis valued non-Native education and believed that more qualified teachers were needed in the schools, and, further, that more time needed to be dedicated to classroom studies.<sup>122</sup>

Like the First Nations leaders, prominent Métis organizers also stood out from their communities due to their education and higher class standing. Joseph Z. Larocque, the first

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<sup>119</sup> Ahenakew, *Voices*, xxi.

<sup>120</sup> Jean Goodwill and Norma Sluman, *John Tootoosis* (Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 1982), 95-110.

<sup>121</sup> Goodwill and Sluman, 154.

<sup>122</sup> Goodwill and Sluman, 155.



president of the Saskatchewan Métis Society (SMS), was described in various works as an educated Métis, but little is known of his actual educational training. Nevertheless, Larocque's education, along with his ability to speak English and Cree allowed him to separate himself from the larger Métis population and become a political leader. Frank Tomkins argues convincingly that because by 1939 most people in the Métis settlements were uneducated, the select few who were educated enough to understand Canada's political system were crucial for the development of the activist movement in the 1930s.<sup>123</sup> This idea is clearly supported by the contributions of Larocque and others such as Joe Ross and Thomas Major, who used their education to intensify the political activities of the Saskatchewan Métis.

Ultimately all of these individuals came to represent a new era of Native leaders. Generally speaking, these leaders became part of a new class of Native people who were in some ways separated from those for whom they were advocating. These leaders were not only educated, but many were also members of the working class, and therefore, often had the capital to finance their political efforts. These were advantages that the majority of the First Nations and Métis populations in Saskatchewan lacked. Without the influence of leaders who had the drive, education and finances to pursue political goals, this new era of Native organization would not have developed.

The presence of a new group of leaders willing to take on the political struggles of Saskatchewan Natives was a significant factor in the development of the interwar political movement, yet as this chapter has demonstrated, it was not the only factor. Lack of proper treaty implementation and increased restrictions on traditional economic practices helped to convince Native populations that it was time to act. And further, the beginning of the Depression brought

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<sup>123</sup> Mike Mercredi, Frank Tomkins, Ron Laliberte, Jan 24- 25, 2004.

increasingly poor economic circumstances to Native populations contributing to dissatisfaction. In the following chapter the ways in which Native activism developed in Saskatchewan during the interwar era will be explored, and the prevalence of political organization will be demonstrated.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Awakening the ‘Great Duty of Uniting’**

While the local conditions in the province of Saskatchewan were necessary for creating the right environment for political activism, the influence of other provincial and even national movements on the Saskatchewan political movement cannot be overlooked. Throughout the early twentieth century a general inclination towards Native political movement was brewing across Canada, and the efforts of Native groups in separate regions became less isolated. These simultaneous political movements occurring across Canada were not coincidental, but rather were indicative of conditions conducive to renewed political strength. Across the nation the political and economic circumstances of Native populations were worsening, yet Native people were concurrently becoming more able to make a stand against their situations. While the political activities of the 1930s are often brushed aside in favour of the more explicit and increasingly widespread actions of the mid to late twentieth century, it is clear that a powerful political movement existed throughout the interwar era.

By the 1930s it was apparent that the First Nations and Métis populations in Saskatchewan needed something to unify their populations and motivate them to express their political identities in a more organized manner. The development of an economic depression, increased attempts by governments to control Native social, political and economic pursuits and the emergence of new political leaders provided the necessary conditions for organized agitation. The existence of these circumstances in Saskatchewan provided revitalization and new direction for the political ideas of

First Nations and Métis groups. Dobbin wrote of the Alberta Métis experience during the 1930s that the founding of the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA) “represented the rejuvenation, after a hiatus of over two generations, of the Métis’ national liberation struggle.”<sup>124</sup> Indeed the very same could be said for both the First Nations and Métis of Saskatchewan as both groups largely disappeared from the organized political scene in the late 1800s as a result of several factors.

The first factor contributing to a decline in political organization was the implementation of the *Indian Act* of 1876. The act, which served not only to define who Indians were, but also centralized all legislation pertaining to the group, proposed to assimilate the First Nations populations.<sup>125</sup> To this end, the *Indian Act* made several attempts to limit the political freedoms and expressions of the First Nations. A second factor that affected the politicization of First Nations and Métis was the 1885 Resistance. The aftermath of this event effectively discontinued the collective outward expression of political goals within the Native community, as the freedoms of First Nations became increasingly curtailed. The newly enforced pass system required First Nations individuals to attain permission from their Indian agent to leave their designated reserve, and subsequent restrictions on religious ceremonies and economic freedoms, decreased First Nations’ groups efforts at political organization. The Métis similarly moved away from political activity directly after 1885, as they continued to face harsh political criticism and increased poverty.

Due to these circumstances, in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Saskatchewan Native populations were largely unable to manifest their political aspirations in effective and organized action. Indeed, the dynamic created out of the *Indian Act* ensured that First

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<sup>124</sup> Murray Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half-Men: The Story of Jim Brady & Malcolm Norris: Métis Patriots of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981), 66.

<sup>125</sup> Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada’s First Nations: A History of the Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002), 263.

Nations groups would remain dominated by Indian agents, farm instructors, missionaries and Department officials, making it difficult for communities to express any of their own political ideals. Similarly, the Métis, though not under the control of the Department, were also unable to maintain their political authority because they lacked the political leadership and knowledge necessary for political agitation. What is seen in this era, therefore, is a general disconnect between the political attitudes still present in many Native communities, and organized political action.

While the previous chapter outlined the causes of renewed political action amongst the Native groups of Saskatchewan during this period, this chapter seeks to explain how activism developed and operated. In discussing the development of political activism, the influence of outside political movements will be addressed to establish how widespread the Native political movement was. Further, by outlining the major oppositions facing First Nations and Métis activism, this chapter will establish that the perseverance of activism through such challenges demonstrates the political nature of Saskatchewan Native populations.

The greater national political movement affecting Saskatchewan First Nations began chiefly as a result of the First World War as First Nations soldiers returning from overseas embraced renewed political ideologies. Stan Cuthand, has argued in his article, “The Native Peoples of the Prairie Provinces in the 1920s and 1930s,” that substantial First Nations participation in the war effort led to increased political and social awareness, and persuaded many of these young men to combat the poor social, political and economic conditions at home in Canada.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Stan Cuthand, “The Native Peoples of the Prairie Provinces in the 1920s and 1930s,” in *One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserve Indians Since Treaty 7*. Eds. Ian A.L. Getty and Donald B. Smith. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), 31.

Professor of Native Studies, Ron Laliberte, explained that First Nations and Métis soldiers had been in an environment of relative equality overseas, where Native and non-Native distinctions were largely unimportant. Upon returning home, however, Natives quickly became disillusioned with the lack of change in the equality of minorities in Canada.<sup>127</sup> Laliberte posited that the frustration accompanying returning Native soldiers along with the Natives' newfound knowledge that they were not alone in their struggle with poverty and social, economic and political repression, led many to pursue political organization.<sup>128</sup>

Mohawk Lieutenant Frederick Oligvie Loft was among these First Nations individuals who, after returning from service, dedicated himself to fighting for the Native political cause at home. A highly ambitious man, Loft felt that a pan-Indian movement, focussing on improved education, land policies and healthcare would benefit the First Nations population, as he believed that the lack of communication and cooperation between communities was contributing to the general decrease in Native political organization.

In Loft's opinion, the First Nations across Canada would stand a better chance of resisting the unwanted policies of the Dominion if they were able to communicate and act together towards a common goal. In this sense, Loft felt that what was lacking in First Nation political action was not force, but rather, cooperation. The notion of pan-Indianism, according to political scientist Paul

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with Mike Mercredi, Frank Tomkins and Ron Laliberte, January 24-25, 2004. Available at the Virtual Museum of Métis History, <[www.metismetis.museum.ca](http://www.metismetis.museum.ca)>, accessed February 17, 2008.

<sup>128</sup> It should be remembered that many of the Treaties signed by the First Nations in Canada exempted them from military service for Great Britain. So while other Canadian men were being conscripted after the implementation of the *Military Service Act* in 1918, First Nations soldiers were volunteering their services. For many, the draw to enlist in a war in which First Nations were not legally required to fight was that war offered opportunities of travel and excitement that simply were not available to First Nations on reserves. Many young men were eager to see the world and were drawn to the romantic appeal of war. For others, however, the war offered a more practical advantage. After a lifetime of abject poverty on reserves and in Métis communities, many First Nations and Métis were simply interested in attaining a steady income.

Tennant, is predicated on the development of “a new, broader Indian identity.”<sup>129</sup> Thus, pan-Indianism emerged when traditional tribal affiliations and identities had been weakened, and new connections were needed to revitalize the strength of Native people.<sup>130</sup> In Saskatchewan, however, there was little evidence of tribal weakness. In fact, a few years prior to the outbreak of the First World War, evidence of cross-tribal political cooperation could be seen in Saskatchewan.

In a series of meetings on the Cowessess reserve between 1908 and 1910, several First Nations representatives met to discuss issues relating to “the treaty promises that had not been carried out and on disaffection with the school system...”<sup>131</sup> By 1911 nine individuals representing various Saskatchewan and Manitoba reserves travelled to Ottawa under the leadership of Cowessess leader and Treaty 4 spokesman Louis O’Soup. Once there, the delegation met with minister of the interior, Frank Oliver and Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Francis Pedley to discuss the concerns of the First Nations. The group spent eight days in talks with government officials, but left with little to show for their efforts. Instead of being viewed by the government as a well organized political group with legitimate grievances, the individuals were dismissed as troublemakers.<sup>132</sup> Though this meeting did not achieve any tangible results for the First Nations, it did represent an early attempt at cross-tribal political cooperation as a way to bring strength to Saskatchewan First Nations’ political movement.

Later on when Loft began organizing Canada’s First Nations, Loft’s desire to create a stronger political collective identity amongst First Nations was well received by many First Nations leaders. Loft’s goal of a pan-Indian organization was realized soon after the First World

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<sup>129</sup> Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), 68.

<sup>130</sup> Tennant, 68-69.

<sup>131</sup> Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 255-256.

<sup>132</sup> Carter, 257.

War when he formed the League of Indians of Canada (LIC). In putting forth his idea for the LIC, Loft circulated a letter to various First Nations leaders across the country. Looking to appeal to the underlying unity between different First Nations groups, Loft wrote that,

Union is the outstanding impulse of men today, because it is the only way by which the individual and collective elements of society can wield a force and power to be heard and their demands recognized by governments. Look at the force and power of all kinds of labor organizations, because of their unions. Now we see the great development and strength of farmers, who are uniting to uphold and advance their interests. In a recent election in Ontario, they have been able to control the Government and Legislature of Ontario. How is this? Because each and all have combined to work together for an end, to elevate their position and noble calling as producers:

In politics, in the past, they have been in the background, scarcely heard or noticed in parliaments or in nature of laws passed, but now they are getting right into the front because they have wakened up to the great duty of uniting.

Us as Indians, from one end of the Dominion to the other, are sadly strangers to each other; we have not learned what it is to co-operate and work for each other as we should; the pity of it is greater because our needs, drawbacks, handicaps and troubles are all similar.<sup>133</sup>

By 1919 the LIC was official, and later that year in hopes of attracting more members, Loft arranged for a conference to be held in Sault Ste. Marie from September 2-4, 1919.<sup>134</sup> After the inception of the LIC, Loft moved swiftly in his attempts to unite First Nations groups across Canada, and in late November 1919 wrote to the Indian Agent at Duck Lake, C. Paul Schmidt, asking for the names and addresses of all educated Indians in the surrounding areas. Hoping to personally entice the western leaders to join the LIC, Loft appealed to “the important necessity of

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<sup>133</sup>LAC, RG10, Vol. 3211, file 527,787, pt. 1, Reel 11340, letter from F.O. Loft to Indian Leaders, “Formation of the League of Indians by F.O. Loft of the Six Nations Band,” November 25, 1919.

<sup>134</sup> Cuthand, 31.



all Indians becoming united into one great association; in this way to stabilize our interests, protect and advance them in ways that will be of national benefit.”<sup>135</sup>

In 1920 the LIC had successfully expanded to the west, with the first meeting in western Canada held at Elphinstone, Manitoba in June 1920. After 1922, when the LIC met at Hobbema, Alberta, a western branch of the LIC was created and became known as the League of Indians of Western Canada (LIWC). Unfortunately for Loft, the eastern branch of the LIC proved to be short-lived as Loft, facing increasing opposition from the police and Department, began to curb his political pursuits. And while the LIWC remained strong momentarily, increasing strain was developing between Alberta and Saskatchewan.

By 1933 the geographical and ideological tension between Alberta and Saskatchewan proved to be too great and the LIWC divided. The Indian Association of Alberta (IAA) developed directly out of the Alberta branch of the LIWC, and became its own organization in 1939. According to Meijer-Drees, the IAA, headed by First Nations leader Felix Callihoo and Métis Leader, Malcolm Norris, “represented a deliberate break with the LIWC “as the organization sought to advance and protect treaty rights within Alberta only.”<sup>136</sup> The IAA clearly felt that a provincial organization, tailored specifically to meet the unique demands of Alberta First Nations would be more effective than a pan-Indian movement which would be distracted by the causes of other regions. In Saskatchewan the LIWC, under John Tootoosis, remained as a provincial organization and continued to develop according to the will of the organization’s leader. Like the

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<sup>135</sup> LAC, RG10, Vol. 3211, file 527,787, pt. 1, Reel, 11340, letter from F.O. Loft to Indian Leaders, “Formation of the League of Indians by F.O. Loft of the Six Nations Band,” November 25, 1919.

<sup>136</sup> Laurie Meijer-Drees, *The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), xiii.

IAA, the Saskatchewan branch of the LIWC had strong community interests, and also shared the belief that a provincial organization would better serve the aims of the provincial bands.<sup>137</sup>

Along with the political divide that now existed between Callihoo's Alberta movement and Tootoosis' Saskatchewan one, a further separation developed between the two leaders throughout the 1930s. Although the IAA had become its own organization, both the IAA and the Saskatchewan branch of the LIWC continued to influence each other as the treaty populations between the provinces overlapped, and often, the leaders and members of the organizations would attend meetings of the other group.<sup>138</sup> The strain between Callihoo and Tootoosis often surfaced when the leaders met and served to highlight how the different political itineraries of the leaders would affect the direction taken by their respective organizations. Illustrating these differences, Meijer-Drees has argued that,

Tootoosis crusaded for the treaties; Callihoo struggled to negotiate fuller Aboriginal inclusion in the Canadian social welfare system. Tootoosis saw his role as linked to the traditions and history of his people, while Callihoo viewed his work as an extension of the democratic process as embodied by the state and extended to the Indian peoples.<sup>139</sup>

The differences in political ideologies between Callihoo and Tootoosis ensured that the Pan-Indian movement would not develop on the prairies.

The eastern political influences from Loft were not the only ones affecting political organizations in Saskatchewan.<sup>140</sup> Political influence stemming from British Columbia also

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<sup>137</sup> Meijer-Drees, 10.

<sup>138</sup> Personal interview with John Tootoosis by Murray Dobbin, Poundmaker Reserve, Saskatchewan, September 11, 1977. Tape available at the Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina, R-A1178/R-A1179. <Accessed March 14, 2008>.

<sup>139</sup> Meijer-Drees, 183.

<sup>140</sup> Loft had actually planned to extend the League to British Columbia, and in order to accomplish this he had planned a trip there in 1923. For unknown reasons, however, he never made the trip, and the result was that the influence of the League ended in Alberta.

developed out of a simultaneous move towards political organization. According to Tennant, Native politics was deeply rooted in the history of British Columbia as the first modern political action undertaken by First Nations in British Columbia occurred in 1887. It was on this date that chiefs from the north coast region, seeking recognition of Aboriginal land title, treaties and self-government petitioned the Colonial government.<sup>141</sup> There is evidence, however, that the Stó:lō of the Fraser Valley had initiated some form of political organization even prior to 1887. *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas* has indicated that a speech was made by the Stó:lō to Governor Seymour as early in August of 1864, records of which are held at the British Columbia Archives in Victoria.<sup>142</sup> These early attempts at political organization in British Columbia were not endeavouring to create a pan-Indian movement, but rather were entirely community based.

The first attempt at official provincial organization in British Columbia did not come until 1916, when First Nations groups mounted an organized resistance in response to the report of the McKenna-McBride Commission.<sup>143</sup> The Royal Commission on Indian Affairs (The McKenna-McBride Commission), appointed in 1913, provided for a commission of five men<sup>144</sup> to travel around the province holding hearings and examining reserves in an attempt to address the increasing discontent among First Nations about the allotment of reserves throughout British Columbia.<sup>145</sup> The main purpose of the Commission was to achieve a final solution to the Indian

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<sup>141</sup> Tennant, 71.

<sup>142</sup> Keith Thor Carlson ed. *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001), 205.

<sup>143</sup> In 1911 a delegation of almost one hundred chiefs from various areas throughout British Columbia gathered to meet with Premier Richard McBride to discuss recognition of First Nations land title and reserves. Although this meeting reflects a degree of pan-Indian organization, an official political organization was not yet formed.

<sup>144</sup> Commissioners and Chairman: Nathaniel W. White from Shelburne, N.S.; James A.J. McKenna department of Indian Affairs official; James Pearson Shaw MLA from Shuswap; Day Hort McDowall of Victoria and Edward Ludlow Wetmore retired chief justice of Saskatchewan to serve as chairman. Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 229.

<sup>145</sup> Tennant, 89.

land question in British Columbia, which included investigating, among other things, rights of way issues on reserve land and reserve sizes.

Tennant has argued that the Commission brought an increase in the political efforts of First Nations peoples as communities strongly opposed the recommendations of the report allowing for the alteration of reserve sizes at the sole discretion of the Department.<sup>146</sup> The result of this collective opposition was the beginning of the political organization, the Allied Tribes, formed by Coast Salish activist Andrew Paull and Haida activist Peter Kelly.<sup>147</sup> This organization, designed to oppose the recommendations of the McKenna-McBride report, also lobbied to resolve the outstanding land claims issue within the province in a way that proved suitable for the First Nations population.<sup>148</sup> Unfortunately for the Allied Tribes, a timely amendment to the *Indian Act* in 1927 greatly hampered the efforts of First Nations activists across the nation. Section 141 of the amendment outlawed the giving or solicitation of funds for the purpose of pursuing Indian claims, making it almost impossible for organizations to hire lawyers or follow their political goals.

This amendment not only restricted the actions of First Nations peoples, but further applied to non-Native peoples, as it was hoped that this amendment would effectively prevent non-Native lawyers and politicians from helping to further the political cause of the First Nations people. Considering both the non-Native involvement in Native organizations such as the IAA, MAA and other Native political organizations, and the need for funds to pursue political claims, this amendment represented a major blow to the political efforts of all Native organizations.

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<sup>146</sup> Tennant, 89.

<sup>147</sup> The McKenna-McBride report is complex, yet the bulk of opposition to the report revolved around four key issues. Firstly, the report authorized the federal and provincial governments to reduce reserve lands without the consent of First Nations bands. Secondly, it restricted the mobility of First Nations people in British Columbia. Thirdly, it did not address the issue of Aboriginal title, and finally, it made resistance to the governments difficult. Harris, *Making Native Space*, 248-259.

<sup>148</sup> Harris, 252-253.

Just as the beginning of the Saskatchewan First Nations political movement was clearly aided by wider national political attitudes and actions, the Métis movement in Saskatchewan had similar influences. For the Métis, however, these influences did not originate in the east, but rather largely stemmed from the political activities of Métis in Alberta. It was in this province, during the late 1920s and early 1930s that massive social and political changes were being tackled by the Métis. In Alberta, the Métis political movement under the L'Association des Métis D'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord Ouest, was led by working and middle class Métis who were united in their belief that the conditions of their people needed improvement. The Association, which in 1940 became known as the Métis Association of Alberta, held its first meeting on December 28, 1932 and was concerned with attaining an independent economic base for the Métis that would allow for some form of self-determination.<sup>149</sup>

Convinced that the answer to the economic problems of the Métis lay in an independent land base, MAA leaders Joseph Dion, Malcolm Norris, Jim Brady, Pete Tomkins and Felix Callihoo, focussed on petitioning the government for the establishment of Métis colonies. Although the men differed in their goals for the settlements—Norris and Brady felt that the settlements would provide both an economic base and self determination, while Tomkins and Dion felt that the settlements were simply a short term solution for poverty—the men went ahead with their scheme.<sup>150</sup>

Armed with their settlement plan, the five men concentrated on attracting the interest of the provincial and federal governments by drawing attention to the abject poverty and unnecessary suffering of the provincial Métis population. Eventually, several factors including the political

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<sup>149</sup>Joe Sawchuk, *The Dynamics of Native Politics: The Alberta Métis Experience* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1998), 7; Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half-Men*, 67-68.

<sup>150</sup> Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half-Men*, 67.

talent and sheer determination of the activists, along with aid from non-Native politicians such as J.M. Dechene and P.G. Davies, resulted in the decision to create a Royal Commission to assess the situation.<sup>151</sup> While the resolution for the Commission was passed by the provincial Cabinet in December 1934, the road to the resulting Ewing Commission was not without setbacks and difficulties.

Since 1932 the MAA had been petitioning for an evaluation of Métis conditions across the province, but had been met with government apathy. As a result, the years of frustration that materialized before the Commission finally occurred seriously affected the Métis leaders' faith in the Commission. This suspicion is hardly surprising as Dobbin describes the three non-Native men assigned to the Commission as defenders of "the status quo and the capitalist system." Dobbin also suggested that the Commissioners, Alfred Freeman Ewing, Alberta Supreme Court judge, Edward Ainsley Braithewaite, doctor and James McCrie Douglas, gentleman, "shared the racial prejudices of the politicians but, unlike the politicians, their prejudices were not moderated by political considerations."<sup>152</sup>

Despite the wariness of the MAA leaders towards the Commissioners, after several years of observing and analyzing the conditions of the Métis in Alberta, the Ewing Commission offered hope to the Métis. The Commission made several recommendations which aimed at promoting a level of economic self-sufficiency above that held by the First Nations populations. While such a recommendation does not sound desirable considering the poor economic state of First Nations, the suggestion made an excellent point. Worried that if given similar rights as the First Nations groups, the Métis would also become wards of the state, the Ewing Commission recommended the creation

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<sup>151</sup> Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half-Men*, 68-78. J.M. Dechene was the Liberal MLA of St. Paul, while P.G. Davies was the federal Conservative MP for Athabasca. The involvement of non-Native politicians in the political affairs of the Alberta Métis was not an uncommon occurrence. Many politicians saw the value in helping the Métis in their district not only for sympathetic reasons, but also in hopes of attracting valuable votes from the Métis.

<sup>152</sup> Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half-Men*, 88-89.

of Métis settlements which would provide an independent land base. The Commissioners felt that access to parcels of land would allow the Métis to engage in farming and stock-raising which would improve their economic status.<sup>153</sup> The resulting legislation, the *Métis Population Betterment Act* passed on November 22, 1938, provided for the development of twelve Métis settlements throughout Alberta.<sup>154</sup>

The Métis experience in Alberta affected how the Saskatchewan Métis pursued political goals, yet an important distinction existed between the politics of the Alberta Métis and that of the Saskatchewan Métis. The aims of both the MAA and the Saskatchewan Métis Society (SMS) of attaining land, access to education and employment for their people were identical, yet the leaders of the MAA pursued these ends by appealing to their basic rights as Canadians, while the SMS lobbied for recognition of their Aboriginal right to land.<sup>155</sup> The differences between the political actions of these two organizations were informed by ideological differences, as the MAA sought only to rectify the issues of poverty faced by a group of Canadian citizens, whereas the SMS was asking for an unprecedented recognition of their right to land due to their Aboriginal status. It was through these differences in ideologies that two very different political strategies could be seen.

It was not necessarily that the MAA felt the Alberta Métis did not have a legitimate Aboriginal claim to the land, but rather, in asking for aid to ease their poverty, the Alberta Métis avoided the convoluted issue of government responsibility. The provincial and federal governments constantly argued about who should be responsible for Métis issues, and had the

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<sup>153</sup> Julia D. Harrison, *Métis: People Between Two Worlds* (Vancouver: The Glenbow-Alberta Institute in association with Douglas & McIntyre, 1995), 101.

<sup>154</sup> Harrison, 104. Although the settlement system was plagued with difficulties, some so extreme that by the 1960s only eight of the original twelve settlements remained, that the settlements existed at all was a reflection of the Alberta government's dedication to the Métis issue. It must be noted however, that the Alberta government was only sympathetic to the economic concerns of the Métis and had no patience for the Métis' calls for self-governance on the settlements.

<sup>155</sup> Interview of Thomas Major by Murray Dobbin, Regina, Saskatchewan, March 14, 1978. Transcript accessed from the Virtual Museum of Métis History <[www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)>. Accessed April 16, 2008.

MAA decided to fight for their Aboriginal rights, as the SMS did, their case would have been turned over to the federal government. The MAA therefore chose to deal exclusively with the provincial government, knowing that while they could not receive benefits based on Aboriginal rights, they could receive assistance as provincial citizens. The SMS, on the other hand, chose to advance their Aboriginal claim to the federal government, and in essence, absolved the province of responsibility for the Métis.

Translating the influence of other political movements into Saskatchewan political activism was not without its challenges. In fact, while Loft had initially envisioned that the power of the LIC would be derived through unification, he had seriously underestimated the heterogeneity of the groups he was attempting to unite. The result of this miscalculation was the development of several different First Nations organizations within Saskatchewan, each of which addressed the issues specific to groups in different regions of the province. The Allied Bands, an organization initially founded in response to the allocation of reserve land to soldiers under the *Soldier Settlement Act* of 1917, became a powerful political force for the protection of treaty rights into the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>156</sup> Established by Treaty 4 First Nations Bands, Pasqua, Piapot and Muscowpetung, the Allied Bands, focussed its efforts on the specific issues of a particular geographical area.

Unlike Loft's LIC which attempted to address broad issues across Canada, the leaders of the Allied Bands, Ben Pasqua, Andrew Gordon, Pat Capps, Charles Pratt, Harry Ball and Abel Watetch were solely concerned with the way in which the *Soldier's Settlement Act* was eroding the land base of First Nations groups on their three reserves. To protest the effects of the Act, delegates of the Allied Bands travelled to Ottawa in 1928 to request that a Royal Commission be

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<sup>156</sup> James M. Pitsula, "First Nations and Saskatchewan Politics," in *Saskatchewan Politics: Into the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Howard A. Leeson (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2001), 353-354.



formed to analyze the administration of Indian affairs.<sup>157</sup> By 1933, however the narrow mandate of the Allied Bands had expanded to include the protection of treaty rights and land, and the association adopted a new name, the Protective Association for Indians and their Treaties (PAIT). True to its name, the PAIT focussed on the protection of treaty rights, but also focussed on land and resource rights, and the improvement of First Nations' education and social welfare.<sup>158</sup> By 1945, the PAIT, along with the help of CCF administrator and legal consultant, Morris Shumiatcher, formulated a brief detailing the concerns of the organization and sent it to the Minister of Indian Affairs.

The creation of the Queen Victoria Treaty Protective Association (QVTPA) and the Association of Saskatchewan Indians (ASI) in the 1940s also serve to highlight the widespread, albeit, heterogeneous nature of Saskatchewan political activism. While the evidence concerning the creation and political aims of the QVTPA varies, it seems that the organization was created in the 1940s to oppose the work of John Tootoosis. The organization was heavily influenced by the Roman Catholic clergy, was opposed to alcohol on reserves and against enfranchisement, and further believed that First Nations political organizations, above all, needed to be unwavering in their commitment to treaty rights.<sup>159</sup> The QVTPA was significant in that it highlighted the social and political differences across the province and between political leaders.

The final First Nations organization operating throughout the interwar years was the Association of Saskatchewan Indians. Formed after a meeting of approximately thirty First Nations in Regina in 1944, the ASI, under Chief Joe Dreaver of the Mistawasis Reserve, was organized as an attempt to revitalize the political movement that had lost momentum with the onset

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<sup>157</sup> Jean Goodwill and Norma Sluman, *John Tootoosis* (Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 1982), 146.

<sup>158</sup> James M. Pitsula, "The CCF Government and the Formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians," *Prairie Forum* 19(2): 1994, 134.

<sup>159</sup> Robert Innes, "The Socio-political Influence of the Second World War on Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans, 1945-1960," unpublished MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2000, 45-6.

of the Second World War in 1939.<sup>160</sup> Dreaver and Dan Kennedy a political activist and member of Carry the Kettle band, organized the association around demands for better education, health care and “redress of veterans’ grievances.”<sup>161</sup> The ASI, however, was probably best known for their controversial approaches to issues of the franchise and cooperation with non-Natives.

Even with the presence of various other political organizations across the province, however, the LIWC remained the most pervasive organization in Saskatchewan up until the mid 1940s. Described by Tootoosis as a mass organization in which entire bands, as opposed to band leaders, would join, the LIWC held local meetings often and conferences annually.<sup>162</sup> The main issues addressed at the meetings were generally similar across the locals and focussed on the land question and treaty rights. Ultimately through discussions of these concerns, leaders would begin to formulate resolutions to be sent to the government indicating First Nations’ dissatisfaction. Despite the legal organization of the LIWC, however, the association did not have a constitution until much later on.

The importance of political involvement in the everyday lives of First Nations people can be seen by the involvement of entire communities in political organization. But even with this important grass roots component to Saskatchewan activism, the influence of political leaders was crucial. The involvement of Ahenakew and Tootoosis in the LIWC, for example, not only served to intensify the political movement, but also helped to shape the direction of the movement according to their individual political ideologies and actions. Ahenakew, the first president of the LIWC, came from a strong Christian background which heavily influenced his role in politics. Uniting his love for the church with his concerns for his people, Ahenakew began working in

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<sup>160</sup> F. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 64.

<sup>161</sup> Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 64.

<sup>162</sup> John Tootoosis, September 11, 1977.

various churches across Saskatchewan after completing his education.<sup>163</sup> This deep connection to the church, though in many ways a source of power to aid in his quest to help his people, also restricted his political goals. Unable to fully commit himself to either the church or Native politics without sacrifice, Ahenakew essentially became trapped between the Native and non-Native worlds. Speaking to this intermediate place, Ahenakew argued, “I tried to fit myself to the white man’s way of life—and I failed. In my failure, however, I still kept to what I believed was the best in Indian life.”<sup>164</sup>

Despite this difficult social position, however, Ahenakew became more politically involved while remaining with the church, and at a meeting for the LIWC in Alberta in 1922, Ahenakew was elected as the Honourable Provincial President of the Saskatchewan League.<sup>165</sup> As president Ahenakew began to show signs of his distrust of government officials and policies— a position shared by much of Saskatchewan’s Native population—and spoke with disdain about the Department’s attempts to restrict the economic pursuits, mobility and politics of First Nations people. Ahenakew wrote,

We were to become farmers, it was decreed. That seemed logical and proper in a society where agriculture was the primary industry, and endless work was highly regarded. But Indians had been nomadic through countless centuries, through all our history; to settle down as farmers meant the complete reversal of habits bred into us by our previous way of life...We were hobbled like horses, limited to our reserves, and quite unfitted for any life outside. It was natural for the Indian to become discontented, to look back to the days when everything that he needed came with more readiness to his hand; and that feeling of discontent and resentment waited only to be brought to a head by any provocative action.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1995), x-xi.

<sup>164</sup> Ahenakew, 71.

<sup>165</sup> Goodwill and Sluman, 135.

<sup>166</sup> Ahenakew, 72.

In this sense, Ahenakew had a keen notion of what was wrong with the Indian policy, and further had ideas of how the problems facing First Nations could be eradicated. Describing Canada's Indians as "the most vexing problems that the Government of Canada has to meet," Ahenakew argued that eradicating this dilemma required great leadership among First Nations and non-Natives. To this end, Ahenakew criticized leaders who aligned themselves with Native groups temporarily or without genuine concern. In Ahenakew's eyes, the LIWC, then, would provide the necessary basis for launching a plan to gain equality and self-sufficiency for First Nations groups. Ahenakew believed that "the principal aim of the League...is equality for the Indian as citizen—equality, that is, in the two-fold meaning of privilege and responsibility; and to achieve this objective, our first emphasis must be on improved educational and health programs."<sup>167</sup>

In his argument for the equality of First Nations' citizenship, Ahenakew appears to be advocating the progression of Natives through the adoption of non-Native systems and ideals. Through his writing it becomes clear that Ahenakew believed that in order to bring out noble qualities in First Nations, the help of non-Natives was needed. Ahenakew explained,

the Indians can become a race of degenerates—a poison in the stream of Canadian life—or, through wise leadership, we can take our place beside the whites—Indians who are independent, self-respecting, productive citizens of a great state. I long for that... Yet I am not blind to the Indian's failings and his weaknesses. We are a difficult people to help.<sup>168</sup>

Ahenakew clearly believed in the value of non-Native systems of education and health, and although he remained suspicious of non-Native leaders and government officials, he was not against using non-Native individuals and non-Native political systems to further his political goals. To pursue his political objectives, therefore, Ahenakew felt that cooperation with the government

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<sup>167</sup> Ahenakew, 85.

<sup>168</sup> Ahenakew, 81.

would eventually result in First Nations being granted greater control over their own affairs.<sup>169</sup> By 1934, however, it had become clear that Ahenakew could not reconcile his dedication to the church and the non-Native way of life, and the direction the activities of the LIWC were taking him, and as a result, Ahenakew resigned as President of the LIWC.

Once Tootoosis took over the LIWC presidency the vast differences in opinions between the two leaders along with their divergent political situations became known. While Ahenakew had believed that Natives should aspire to be a part of the non-Native world and felt the Native political organizations should seek the aid of outsiders, Tootoosis disagreed. This might seem surprising considering Tootoosis, like Ahenakew, had been influenced by the non-Native population through his schooling and political efforts. Yet Tootoosis' political policies tended to isolate Saskatchewan First Nations from non-Natives and even non-Treaty individuals. In her comparison of the political policies of Callihoo in Alberta and Tootoosis, Meijer-Drees has suggested:

Closely linked to his desire to distance himself from non-treaty people was Tootoosis's reticence to cooperate with 'outsiders'. Later in life Tootoosis was more vocal about his opposition to outside help. He frequently criticized the IAA for its reliance upon non-Indian advisors, whom he believed were distracting people from the primary issue: treaty rights....Tootoosis did not believe in gaining help that encouraged the integration of Indian peoples into mainstream Canadian society through cooperation with the government.<sup>170</sup>

For Tootoosis, the political goal of the LIWC should not be to become part of the Canadian political system, but rather the main aim must be protection of the treaties, and therefore, the maintenance of First Nations' separate status. In this sense, "... the treaty was the reason for being—it was the future and the past."<sup>171</sup> Tootoosis' belief that political organizations ought to focus on

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<sup>169</sup> Edward Ahenakew Papers, Saskatchewan Archives Board. File 11 "Manuscripts Entitled 'Old Keyam', 102.

<sup>170</sup> Meijer-Drees, 181-182.

<sup>171</sup> Meijer-Drees, 183.

protecting treaty rights, and maintaining the separation between treaty First Nations groups and other Natives and non-Natives, seemed to stem from his upbringing. Though educated in residential schools, Tootoosis' father, John Senior, recognized early on that he would have to re-educate his children in the traditional ways in order to prepare them for reintegration into reserve life.<sup>172</sup> Consequently, the value of knowing and maintaining the Cree culture remained important in Tootoosis' life, and he was not interested in compromising that cultural distinctiveness for Canadian citizenship.

Yet it was not simply cultural preservation that motivated Tootoosis' belief that status First Nations should remain socially and politically separate from other Native groups. Tootoosis also reasoned, practically, that status First Nations remained on one side of the fence, while Métis, non-status First Nations and non-Natives remained on the other side.<sup>173</sup> For Tootoosis this meant that the groups were so different from each other, and required divergent political goals that the groups could not be, and should not be unified under one political movement. To do so would ensure political failure. Tootoosis' insistence that the LIWC should only cater to Treaty First Nations also meant that his goal was not to create a provincial-level political union. Instead, Tootoosis preferred a national or treaty-based union which helps to explain why the LIWC, under Tootoosis' leadership, did not extend evenly throughout the province, but instead remained centred in the north.<sup>174</sup>

The differences in the political ideologies held by Ahenakew and Tootoosis were informed by a variety of factors and therefore serve to highlight why there was such disunity amongst the First Nations in Saskatchewan. The political and social situations of First Nations individuals were

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<sup>172</sup> Goodwill and Sluman, 106-7.

<sup>173</sup> John Tootoosis, September 11, 1977.

<sup>174</sup> Meijer-Drees, 182.

often not the same, and resulted in different political abilities and legal rights. Ultimately these differences not only created divisions within certain organizations, but also resulted in the formulation of a number of political organizations around the province. By 1942, however, when the LIWC had lost momentum due to the increasing power of the other Saskatchewan organizations, a shift towards increased political unity began. In 1944, after attending a conference of a new national organization, the National Indian Brotherhood (NAIB), led by noted British Columbia activist Andrew Paull, Tootoosis' agreed to organize a Saskatchewan branch.<sup>175</sup> Tootoosis' decision to join this national movement reflected a shift towards the beginning of another stage of Native activism which reached full maturation after the Second World War.

Unlike the First Nations movement in Saskatchewan which was fragmented into several political organizations, the Métis had concentrated their efforts into one organization, the Saskatchewan Métis Society (SMS). The society began informally in 1931 when Métis from Regina and the towns of Lebret, Qu'Appelle and Lestock, met to discuss a range of social and economic issues affecting the Métis. According to original SMS member and Regina resident, Thomas Major, the society began mainly as a result of curiosity about scrip. Major insisted that many Métis, especially younger generations who were not directly involved in the process, were interested in what happened with scrip after 1907 when it ceased being issued in Saskatchewan.<sup>176</sup> Scrip, "a coupon denominated in a fixed amount of acres or dollars that could be applied to the purchase of surveyed dominion lands opened for homesteading," emerged as the Macdonald government's solution to the question of Métis rights.<sup>177</sup> A policy formulated in direct reaction to

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<sup>175</sup> Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 68.

<sup>176</sup> Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

<sup>177</sup> John Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Calgary: Fifth House Publishing, 2007), 16.

the 1885 Métis Resistance, scrip was designed to be an efficient way to address Métis grievances while at the same time, opening up the west for settlement.

The policy failed on many levels, however. Initially the process for attaining land scrip, which was non-transferable, was inefficient since Métis were forced to first travel to Dominion Land offices, and then wait for their claim to be approved by Ottawa. To avoid this time-consuming and unrealistic process, the allocation of transferable money scrip became more common. This form of scrip could be used to buy land, or could simply be sold for cash. Unfortunately, though money scrip became more convenient for the Métis to attain, it was often purchased by land speculators for significantly less than its value, leaving the Métis with no land and little money.<sup>178</sup> In the end, the system was fraught with problems and failed the Métis. Most had been left with nothing, yet the Dominion insisted that Métis' Aboriginal title to the land had been effectively extinguished. By 1930 when the *NRTA* had been enacted and it became clear that Métis rights to natural resources had been ignored, the Métis began to look back at the failed scrip policy for answers.

Those Métis involved in the early organization of the SMS felt that the first step of the organization should be to talk to the Elders about their scrip experiences. In doing this the leaders hoped to get a better idea of the expectations the Métis had held of the system, and could better judge how to tackle the issue. Travelling to southern towns such as Balgonie and Willowbunch, the men sought to first learn everything they could about Métis history from the older generations before officially beginning an organization. According to SMS organizer Joe Ross the men “wanted to [first] see where we stood and how we could present ourselves.”<sup>179</sup> It was only after the

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<sup>178</sup> Weinstein, 16-17.

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Joe Ross by Murray Dobbin, Vancouver, British Columbia, n.d.. Tape available from the SAB, R-A1329.1, R-A1329.2. <Accessed March 14, 2008>; Wesley Budd, *History of Métis Organizations of Saskatchewan*, 5.



men had travelled around for a little while that they began having more formal meetings. Essentially, during these formative years of the association, the SMS leaders had chosen the political strategy that would carry them into the Depression years. The decision to focus on the problems of the scrip system as the basis for Métis political activism would later come to haunt the movement.

In beginning the movement, however, Ross has insisted that the meetings in the first year of the organization were rough, and were characterized by disagreement. The group, calling themselves the “Halfbreeds of Saskatchewan,” had trouble in these early years determining who should be included in the organization, what their political goals should be, and further, whether or not the organization should use the term ‘halfbreed’ or ‘Métis’ in its title.<sup>180</sup> As the debates evolved the members were forced to define who a halfbreed was, and in fact, many of the members rejected the term halfbreed altogether, insisting that the term carried negative connotations. In the end, in order to accurately reflect the majority of the Métis members, the organization had decided to change its name, and the term halfbreed was replaced with Métis in 1937.<sup>181</sup>

Along with this decision to reject the potentially derogatory term halfbreed, the organization also decided to use the term ‘society’ in the title of their organization. It was believed that ‘society’ was a politically neutral term, while ‘organization’ was politically charged. In explaining this decision, SMS members reasoned that even as late as the 1930s the memory of the Métis Resistance remained fresh in the minds of settlers and politicians, and in order to dispel any fears that a Métis or Indian uprising could occur again, the SMS focussed on maintaining a non-threatening appearance.<sup>182</sup> It was decided that the term society would not be associated with

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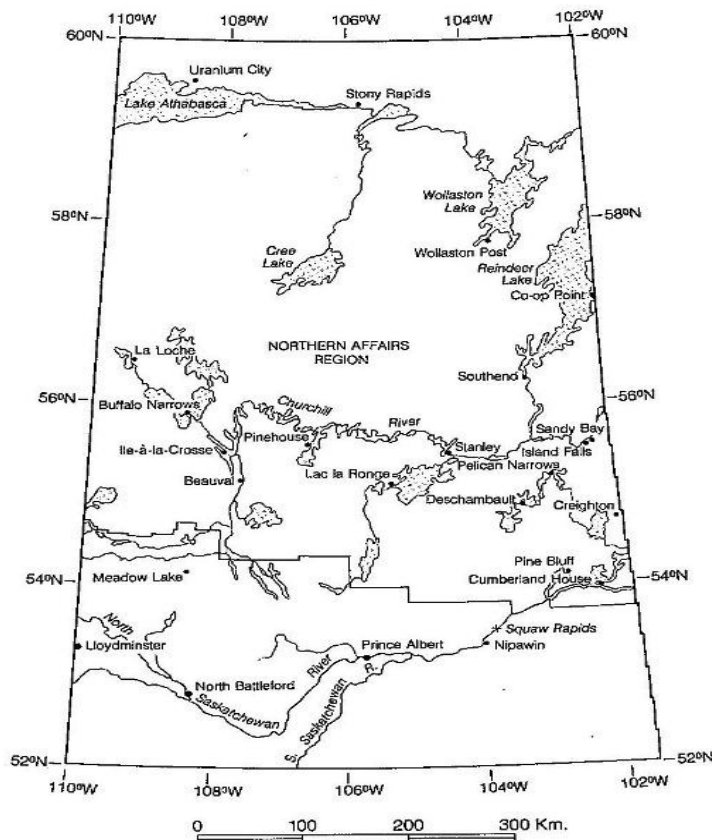
<sup>180</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.

<sup>181</sup> Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

<sup>182</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.; Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

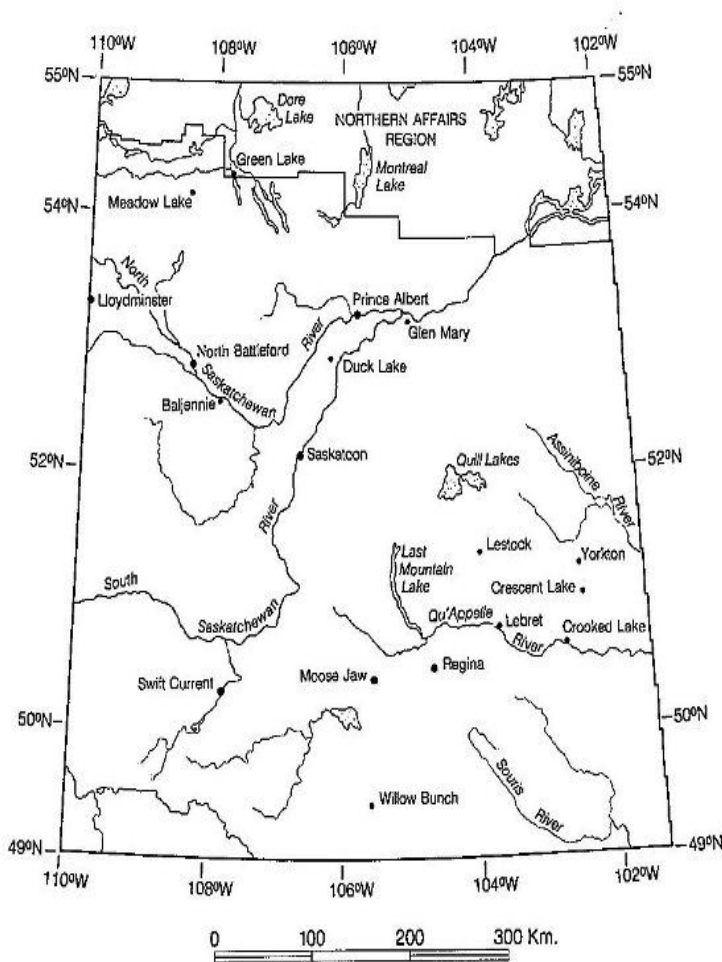
political uprising, but rather with cultural revival and preservation, allowing the SMS to follow their political aims without objection.

Figure 2.1 Map of Northern Saskatchewan Métis Settlements.



Source: F.L. Barron Fonds. University of Saskatchewan Archives. MG233. "Saskatchewan Métis Settlements."

Figure 2.2 Map of Southern Saskatchewan Métis Settlements



Source: F.L. Barron Fonds. University of Saskatchewan Archives. MG233. "Saskatchewan Métis Settlements."

In the early years of the organization the Métis worked to establish locals and an executive before becoming chartered and drafting a constitution. Ross has insisted that this strategy of organizing prior to being an official organization allowed the group to test out their political ideas without attracting publicity. As a result, at a meeting in the spring of 1932, an informal executive was established with Ross as the president, J.Z. Larocque as vice president, Martin Knutson as

secretary and the other members acting as the executive.<sup>183</sup> While some members such as Ross have since downplayed the importance of this early executive by insisting that it was not a real political body, it nonetheless reflected the beginning of a real political movement.

Perhaps an indication of Ross' conviction that the executive was informal was that, by July of 1932, Ross had stepped down as president saying that he could be more useful as an organizer on the road. Ross believed that the SMS would benefit from the creation of more locals across the province before the society became formally established, and in travelling to places such as Lestock, Ituna, Lebret, Telemt, Battleford and Baljennie,<sup>184</sup> Ross attracted many Métis to the SMS. Once Ross relinquished his role as President of the association, Larocque assumed the position, and despite the fact that Larocque came much later to the organization than many others, he remained president once the organization formalized with a constitution in 1937.<sup>185</sup>

Perhaps it was Larocque's involvement in the Canadian political system as a Liberal that made him a desirable candidate for president of the organization. Certainly Larocque's knowledge of Canadian politics would have proven to be an asset, yet a few of the founding SMS members indicated that the Métis were wary of Larocque's association with partisan politics.<sup>186</sup> Nevertheless, by 1937 when the SMS became a chartered organization, and the constitution had been drafted, the association had already been well established as a province-wide political organization. Though the evidence varies on the exact number of SMS locals created at this time, there were at least sixteen and perhaps as many as thirty locals.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

<sup>184</sup> Not to be confused with Balgonie which was in the south, Baljennie is a town close to Battleford.

<sup>185</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.; Thomas Major, March 14, 1978. By 1946 when the Métis met for a Convention in Regina, R.O. St. Denis of Saskatoon remarked that there were as many as fifty-three branches, but that he was not sure how many of those were active at the time. According to the Chairman, Dr. Shumiatcher, the long absence of the Secretary-Treasurer, Wilna Moore, meant that the records were not available for consultation.

<sup>186</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.

<sup>187</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.; Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

The framework of the SMS was designed so that within each local there would be an elected executive who would hold meetings on issues deemed most important to them. Then, once a year, three delegates from each local would come together to discuss prevalent issues.<sup>188</sup> Though the political goals of the SMS members sometimes differed, generally speaking, the objectives of each member centred on constitutional claims. As mentioned earlier, rather than seeking a quick fix to community poverty, the SMS focussed on the bigger issues such as the recognition of Métis Aboriginal rights. According to noted Métis advisor, John Weinstein, the objective of the SMS in the 1930s was to “procure federal compensation for extinguishment of the Métis share of Aboriginal title to the country in the form of assistance for the Métis to establish themselves in agriculture and industry.”<sup>189</sup>

Like most political movements aimed at enacting change from within a system of dominance, once the Native political organizations were established in Saskatchewan, several challenges developed which hampered the efforts of this new Native political movement. Most notable were the considerable generational, geographical and cultural divisions among First Nations and Métis communities which resulted in internal political separations, the confrontational attitudes held by Department and government officials towards the Native political cause, and the beginning of the Second World War. These factors not only threatened the concrete success of Native political activism, but further challenged the ideological basis of the movement. The development of this new political movement required addressing differences in political ideologies, class divisions and economic challenges among others.

The first threat to the movement was the generational divide that existed between the political goals of new leaders and those of the community Elders. It was not necessarily that the

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<sup>188</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.

<sup>189</sup> Weinstein, 26.

community Elders were not political, but, rather, that they tended to operationalize their political pursuits in different ways, or perhaps did not know how to activate them at all. Speaking generally about Saskatchewan First Nations Elders during the 1930s, Tootoosis has proposed that while the Elders were militant within their councils as early as the 1920s, they simply lacked the knowledge and resources to activate their political beliefs on a larger scale.<sup>190</sup>

Tootoosis explained that the disconnect that existed between the attitudes of the Elders, and the actions (or lack thereof) which resulted, was largely due to the nature of the relationship between Elders and government officials after the treaties were signed. Interpreters were needed to negotiate treaties, and later, farm instructors and Indian agents became instrumental as middle men between First Nations and governments. This relationship ensured that the Elders would never fully exercise their voices as independent agents, and the lack of direct communication with the governments seriously undermined the political independence of the communities. Elders became increasingly unable to understand how to repair the social, political and economic damage plaguing their communities.

Another factor contributing to political disconnect among the community Elders can be traced to the 1869 local government provisions which were later incorporated into the 1876 *Indian Act*. The provision allowed for increased political control by the First Nations, but a non-traditional elective system was gradually introduced as a form of community governance and served to undermine traditional tribal governance systems.<sup>191</sup> While traditionally, chiefs and headmen were hereditary, under the new system, elected chiefs and band councils were given authority. Realistically, the elected individuals, though sanctioned by the Department, were merely figureheads, as they could be deposed at the will of Superintendent General of Indian Affairs.

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<sup>190</sup> John Tootoosis, September 11, 1977.

<sup>191</sup> Dickason, 264.

Moreover, while the elective system spread slowly, where the system was practiced it not only undermined the authority of traditional leaders, but also ensured that even government-sanctioned leaders in Native communities would hold no real power.

The political circumstances of the First Nations communities guaranteed that a new generation was needed to overturn the political stagnation. In fact, the first generation of residential school graduates became instrumental in the political revival of First Nations communities. The schools were initially designed to aid the federal government's goals of cultural assimilation, but the schools also gave First Nations students the tools they needed to act within the Canadian political system. Both Tootoosis and Ahenakew have insisted that their ability to read and understand English allowed them to further their knowledge about the *Indian Act*, the treaties, and other aspects of the political system affecting the Native population.<sup>192</sup> Once this younger generation of educated individuals helped the Elders to understand that First Nations could politically organize and challenge government Indian policy, many became eager for change.<sup>193</sup>

This enthusiasm for new political strategies resulted in a substantial generational power shift. Tootoosis insisted that prior to the 1930s First Nations Elders in Saskatchewan were still engaged in traditional community politics such as the Elder's Council. In this council, the Elders of the community would meet to discuss various issues affecting their community, and the members maintained a degree of authority not granted to younger members of the community. So while many members of the older generation may have more willingly accepted the role of the younger

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<sup>192</sup> While the knowledge that many First Nations gained from residential schools helped them in their political organization, this is not to say that the schools were not disruptive and negative in many other aspects. The complexities of the residential school system in Canada warrant much greater attention that simply cannot be granted here. For more information consult, J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999) and Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988).

<sup>193</sup> John Tootoosis, September 11, 1977.

generation in operationalizing the long-standing Native political goals, many were opposed to the new community hierarchies that were being imposed as a result. Tootoosis experienced this change in the Elder's council first hand when he became the first young man asked to speak at the Council on his reserve.<sup>194</sup>

This generational division also hampered Métis political organization to a certain extent, yet the differences between the older and younger generations were not based on political authority, but rather on political priorities. The older generations were typically more concerned with the scrip question, and viewed the SMS as a way to get this outstanding issue addressed. The Métis who had been around when scrip was issued believed that attaining outstanding scrip claims would solve all of the social, political and economic problems within their communities. These Métis felt slighted by the infamously inadequate Dominion scrip policy, and insisted that the Métis were entitled to land that was either not granted or had been taken away through speculation.<sup>195</sup>

Further some Métis, especially those in the south who wanted to farm, reasoned that access to land was the ultimate solution. The younger generations, on the contrary, though curious about scrip at the beginning of their political journeys soon realized that the organizations should focus attention elsewhere. Many of these Métis, realizing that farming was an unrealistic goal, became interested in educational training and planned to work in the cities rather than on the farms. In this respect, Ross sympathized with the younger generation, reasoning that education and employment were most important for political, economic and cultural revival.<sup>196</sup>

While the differing political opinions between generations within the Native communities certainly threatened the success of the movement, a further factor, unrelated to activism, made

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<sup>194</sup> John Tootoosis, September 11, 1977.

<sup>195</sup> Harry W. Daniels, *The Forgotten People: Métis and non-status Indian Land Claims* (Ottawa: Native Council of Canada, 1979), 2.

<sup>196</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.



organizing difficult. The geography of Saskatchewan proved to be so diverse that Native communities from different ends of the province had difficulty communicating and cooperating. In terms of communication, the vast distances and challenging geographical landscapes ensured that travelling outside of one's own area would be time consuming and difficult. Although many leaders were eager to recruit members from across the province, the fiscal realities of the organizations often prevented it.

The expression of Department indifference to Native political organization was also manifested in a refusal to fund political organizations. After restricting access to potential funds for activism with the 1927 *Indian Act* amendment, the Department went even further to ensure there would be no money to fund agitation by refusing grants to Native organizations and also refusing to authorize the use of band funds for activism. The result was that any funds that were needed to finance Native political goals, such as travelling costs for meetings and recruitment, had to be raised by the groups themselves.<sup>197</sup> At the best of times, securing the necessary income for these organizations would have been difficult, but the strain was further intensified during the Depression years when wages were dramatically reduced. In most of the organizations, small dues were charged to members each year, and donations were gratefully accepted. When the finances of the organizations were not healthy enough to cover expenses, however, many of the leaders used their personal funds. Thriftiness became a strict policy within the organizations and any opportunity to save on costs was readily embraced. The SMS, for example, ingeniously saved on transportation costs by sending Ross across the province to recruit new members. Ross was blind and was therefore allowed to travel on the railway for free.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> According to Dickason the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians under the leadership of Walter Deiter was the first Native organization to receive federal funding for community organization. This occurred in 1966. Dickason, 310.

<sup>198</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.

Ross' role as a cheap way in which to organize the SMS and recruit new members highlights a further significant challenge to the development of First Nations organizations—the freedom of mobility. The Métis were desperately impoverished and politically oppressed, but because the Métis were not wards of the government they retained many general freedoms that First Nations were refused. The ability to move freely around the province was key for the organization of a unified political movement, and in an attempt to isolate First Nations groups from each other and prevent political and religious gatherings, the Department initiated a permit system which required First Nations to obtain permission from their Indian agent before leaving the reserve. The pass system survived well into the twentieth century and, though it was never fully effective, reflected a violation of treaty promises.<sup>199</sup> Nevertheless, the system remained in effect as “an instrument of confinement” designed to calm any fears of an Indian uprising, and when it became clear that the system was legally unjustifiable, and largely ineffective, the system was altered to simply monitor off reserve movement.<sup>200</sup>

While the permit system was never an entirely effective means of controlling the First Nations populations, the extent to which it affected the mobility of these groups cannot be trivialized. Tootoosis recounted his excursions throughout the province without a pass with a sense of pride, as these trips indicated a refusal to obey an unfair system. Yet Tootoosis also explained that he would only dodge the system when he could not attain permission to travel to other reserves for LIWC business. That Tootoosis would even attempt to follow the rules is an indication of the effect the pass system had on Natives. Most First Nations were not interested in being reckless as they knew that if they were caught by the RCMP or Indian agents, they would have to

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<sup>199</sup> F. Laurie Barron, “The Indian Pass System in the Canadian West, 1882-1935,” *Prairie Forum* 13 (1) 1988: 27-30.

<sup>200</sup> Barron, “The Indian Pass System,” 30-37.

explain their right to be where they were. As with Tootoosis, sometimes the explanations were accepted; other times Tootoosis' political activities were restricted.

The mobility restrictions placed on First Nations populations in the province similarly affected the extent to which northern and southern populations could politically unite. Permission was needed from the Indian agent in order to leave the reserves, and it should not be a surprise that Indian agents were not generally keen to grant passes for First Nations individuals pursuing political activism. According to Tootoosis the restrictions that prevented the unification of the First Nations population created a need for the development of other political organizations.

In fact, Tootoosis has insisted that the development of the PAIT and the ASI occurred largely because the influence of the League did not extend into southern Saskatchewan. And while the majority of the population of First Nations lived north of Saskatoon (as illustrated in Figure 2.3), there was an increasing need for organization in the south throughout the interwar era.<sup>201</sup> While the permit system was not a factor for the Métis, the geographic challenge that hindered First Nations organization was similarly apparent with the Métis. The influence of the SMS remained largely in the south, but in the north, where Métis were increasingly nomadic, organization or travelling to southern locals in order to attend SMS meetings was unrealistic.

The existence of three major Saskatchewan First Nations political organizations and the inability of the SMS to extend their influence across the entire province further speak to another aspect of provincial geography—cultural differences based on geographical realities. Addressing the differences between the Plains Cree and the northern Woods Cree, Ahenakew argued that the Woods Cree remained isolated and ignorant, and insisted that they were “disheartened to a state of

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<sup>201</sup> John Tootoosis, September 11, 1977.

unhealthy resignation, defeated by their hard life, they have no spirit to begin anything.

Improvement seems impossible.”<sup>202</sup> Drawing on these differences, Ahenakew suggested that,

[the Woods Cree’s] viewpoint is completely different from the white man’s, so that it is one of the hardest things to reason with them. We who are the Plains Cree have come, in some ways at least, to see as the white man does; the Bush Cree have never had that same chance. Their lives would seem as remote, as harsh, as desolate as that rough trail we travelled to reach them...<sup>203</sup>

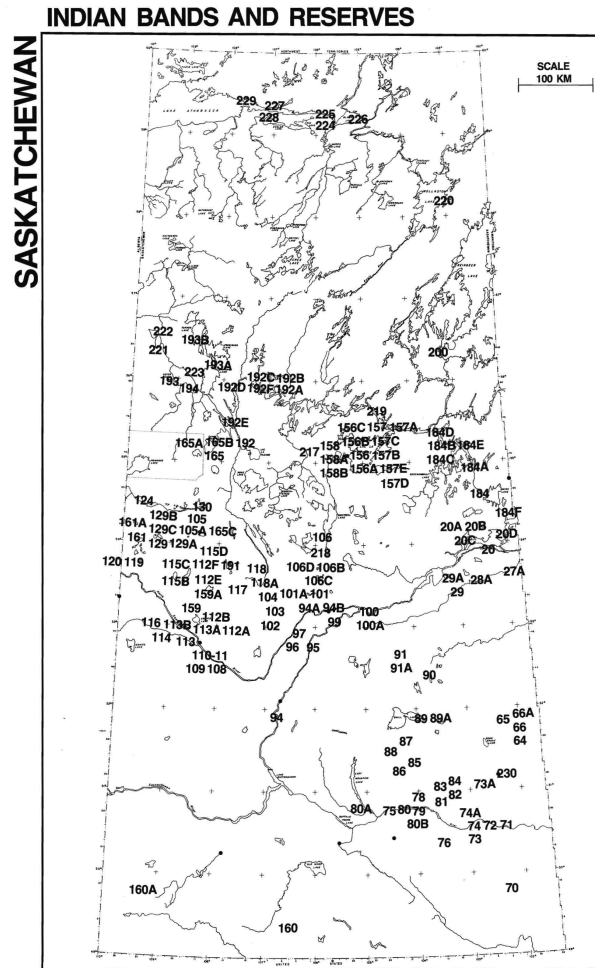
The northern bands, far removed from the influences of the non-Native population, tended to be less involved in official political organizations. Instead, these groups, along with the northern Métis favoured a less formal, case by case evaluation of situations. If, for example,

Figure 2.3 Saskatchewan Indian Bands and Reserves.

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<sup>202</sup> Ahenakew, 55.

<sup>203</sup> Ahenakew, 55.



Source: *The Canadian Atlas of Aboriginal Settlement* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute of Métis Studies and Applied Research, 1994), 14. See accompanying names in Appendix A.

game laws were affecting northern subsistence, a specific and targeted action would be taken. In this respect there seemed to be less of a need for official and collective organizations in the north, and as a result, SMS locals were not established any farther north than Beauval (just north of Green Lake).<sup>204</sup>

Although the concentration of SMS locals remained in the south, the society still experienced a profound power struggle in the late 1930s. The division in the Society was described

<sup>204</sup> Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half-Men*, 172; Joe Ross, n.d.

as being between the northern and southern Métis, but the true northern Métis were not really involved at all. Instead the northern Métis were those members of the SMS around the Saskatoon area, while those in the south were around Regina. The division between Regina and Saskatoon in the 1930s, though not strictly geographically driven, was intense. According to Ross, the fierce competition that developed between the Saskatoon and Regina locals can be solely attributed to the political involvement of Wilna Moore. Moore, a non-Native teacher and politician, described by Major as both intelligent and enterprising, joined the SMS in the mid-1930s.<sup>205</sup> Though the majority of the Métis members of the SMS lived in the area surrounding Regina, Moore's involvement with the society from Saskatoon resulted in a significant shift in power within the organization.

It was Moore's education and political savvy that made her as detested by the Regina members as she was liked in Saskatoon. Those in Saskatoon trusted Moore's knowledge and believed that under her guidance, the SMS would accomplish things that would otherwise be out of reach for the uneducated SMS population. Métis in Regina, such as Ross and Major, however, were less trusting of Moore and were convinced that she was simply using the SMS for her own political gains. According to Major, Moore had hoped to be appointed to the Privy Council, and insisted that Moore's involvement with an organization such as the SMS could secure her place on the council.<sup>206</sup> Speaking of Moore, Major argued,

...she had enough money and she also had enough education to convince you that she meant well... And if you didn't read between the lines, you'd never know. But I'm sure of it, that she wanted to be a member of Privy Council. Now, the way I understood at the time

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<sup>205</sup> The involvement of Moore in the SMS is not meant to represent a full discussion on the involvement of women in Saskatchewan Native activism in this era. While there is evidence that other women were involved, both directly and indirectly in the movement, the issue of gender will not be discussed in any great length in this study. This issue warrants much greater attention than cannot be granted in this thesis.

<sup>206</sup> Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

was an organization such as ours of 2800 members could have put her in there.<sup>207</sup>

While it is difficult to substantiate Major's claims and determine whether or not Moore was seriously seeking to become a member of the federal cabinet, it is clear that many Métis saw Moore's involvement simply as a ploy to further her political career. Moore's involvement with the SMS, and later, the power she held over the Saskatoon Métis came to be deeply resented by those in the southern locals.

By the early 1940s, Moore attempted to increase her influence within Saskatoon by creating another local within the city—a move which baffled and appalled those in Regina. The motion to have both a West side and a Nutana branch was passed at the Saskatoon local, and the result was that Saskatoon was able to send six representatives from the city (three from each local) when the other centres were only allowed three.<sup>208</sup> This move proved to be damaging to both Moore's reputation and the SMS, and while Moore gained more political strength in Saskatoon, she utterly ruined her chances of extending her influence elsewhere.

The division between Saskatoon and Regina that resulted from Moore's actions significantly affected the entire movement. In essence a major split developed between the old society supporters who believed that the power and the headquarters of the organization should remain in Regina, and the significantly smaller proportion of Moore's supporters who viewed Saskatoon as the new centre of power. The debate as to whether the central point of the organization should be in Regina or Saskatoon remained as a constant issue and became a point of discussion even as late as the Métis Conference in 1946. Many of the original members of the organization argued that the SMS should be located in Regina in order to uphold close ties with members of the provincial government, but others insisted that maintaining headquarters in

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<sup>207</sup> Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

<sup>208</sup> Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

Saskatoon greatly reduced travelling costs for those in the north.<sup>209</sup> Blaming Moore for creating this ongoing debate, Ross even went as far as to insist that Moore's involvement in the society single-handedly killed the entire Saskatchewan Métis political movement.<sup>210</sup> In fact, at the 1946 Métis Conference in Regina, Ross remarked that the ability of the southern Métis to remain politically active after the SMS shifted to the north was greatly hampered.<sup>211</sup>

It is unlikely that the actions of one woman in Saskatoon could have been responsible for damaging the Métis movement, and in fact, it is reasonable to assume that many of the original members of the SMS were simply upset with the shift in power within the organization. Responding to Ross' statement that the northern delegates of the SMS had politically excluded the southern members, R.O. St. Denis of Saskatoon insisted that the SMS had been running in a democratic way and had in no way refused entry to any Métis in the province.<sup>212</sup> Not discounting the role of Moore and Métis delegates from the north as factors in the decline of the SMS, the reluctance by some Native individuals to be a part of the political movement created a challenge as well.

Upon initial examination the notion that the Native population was not always eager and dedicated to this new political cause is somewhat puzzling. Once Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis attained adequate tools to politically organize, the entire Native community should have been enthusiastic to mobilize. In reality, there were several factors which contributed to a large

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<sup>209</sup> SAB, J.H. Sturdy Papers, M14 file 198, "Métis Conference, 1946," Conference Proceedings, 61-62.

<sup>210</sup> Joe Ross, n.d. Moore was not the only non-Native involved in the SMS during this period, and this outside help represents a substantial break from the political strategies of many of the First Nations organizations in the same era. Generally speaking, the Métis were more willing to seek and accept the help of non-Natives, and perhaps this is a result of the political status of Métis in Canada. Unlike the First Nations groups, the Métis had the right to vote, and were Canadian citizens, and although the Métis did not always exercise their political rights in the mainstream system, often politicians would volunteer their services in order to secure Métis votes. This is not to say that non-Natives were not involved in First Nations activism, but it is fair to say that most Saskatchewan First Nations leaders were more leery to seek out or accept help.

<sup>211</sup> Sturdy Papers, "Métis Conference, 1946," Conference Proceedings, 10.

<sup>212</sup> Sturdy Papers, "Métis Conference, 1946," Conference Proceedings, 10.



degree of indifference towards political activism within Native communities. The first factor which contributed to a lack of responsiveness in this era was the general distrust many Natives had for political organizations. Ross has argued that throughout the development of the SMS, many Métis chose not to become involved. Larocque (in explaining the early efforts of the organization to draw interest from the Métis communities in Saskatchewan) remarked that the organizers were met with “vast indifference.”<sup>213</sup> Larocque argued that “the Métis are hard to organize. There is always a suspicion that the officer has an ulterior motive, that they might gain some political prestige...”<sup>214</sup> This worry that politicians were behind the organization caused serious suspicion amongst many of the Métis. These fears turned out to be well founded, as leaders such as Larocque had no qualms about aligning himself in partisan politics to best suit their needs. Ross has explained that Larocque’s connection with the Liberal party deterred many people from joining the SMS.<sup>215</sup>

Perhaps many of the fears Native people had of political organization stemmed from the unpleasant memories of the Resistance. Aware that political mobilization had the potential to profoundly damage their communities, First Nations and Métis individuals may not have been prepared to take the risk. As the movements matured, however, and it became increasingly clear that conscious steps were being taken to politicize in a non-threatening manner, more individuals became involved. Another issue affecting Métis involvement in political action, however, was the restrictive nature of SMS organization. According to the 1937 SMS constitution, individual Métis were not able to join the association, but rather, were required to have membership in an SMS local. This restriction proved to alienate many potential members as there were areas within the province that did not have SMS locals. This issue became especially important in 1946 when the

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<sup>213</sup> Sturdy Papers, “Métis Conference, 1946,” Conference Proceedings, 12.

<sup>214</sup> Sturdy Papers, “Métis Conference, 1946,” Conference Proceedings, 12.

<sup>215</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.

Métis were called to meet Premier Douglas in hopes of addressing Métis problems. According to Ross, many Métis who would have attended the conference in order to have their concerns heard believed that they were not eligible to attend if they were not members of the SMS.<sup>216</sup>

The dominant attitudes of the government towards the political organization of First Nations and Métis people, however, also posed a serious challenge to the success of these movements. In the early part of the twentieth century when Loft was pushing for the political unification of First Nations people, the Canadian government was not impressed. Keeping in mind the broader political situation in Canada, especially in the early 1920s when the country became increasingly politically fragmented, Canada's reaction to Native political movements should not be surprising. The 1985 publication *Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* by historians John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager outlined the volatile political and social situation in Canada from the early 1920s until the 1940s. Within this time frame, war, economic recession and "A cacophony of dissentient voices—communist, fascist, CCF, Social Credit, Union Nationale, Reconstructionist" became the context in which Native activism developed and, therefore, affected how the political movement was received by Canadians.<sup>217</sup>

Not surprisingly, within this context of instability the Canadian government adopted a position of deliberate inaction and thereby refused to do any more than acknowledge the receipt of correspondence from Native organizations. During D.C. Scott's tenure as Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, therefore, the Department was at times unsure of how to deal with Native political organizations. While the Department had granted limited control over minor community matters through the appointment of Band Councils, the First Nations

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<sup>216</sup> SAB, J.H. Sturdy Papers, M14 file 198, Métis Conference, 1946, 58-59; Joe Ross, n.d.

<sup>217</sup> John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Steward, 1985), 331.

organizations acted independently, much to the chagrin of the Department. Historian John Leonard Taylor, in comparing the administration of Band Councils and Indian associations has argued that,

Indian political associations were something different. Where they developed, they did so in response to Indian needs rather than those of the government. They were not under the control of the Department. They also tended to group Indians in units larger than the band. Some claimed national, or even international significance in their titles. Moreover, political associations and those who were active in them often came into direct conflict with official policy.<sup>218</sup>

To combat these organizations, D.C. Scott typically adopted a position of intolerance, and though the stance of the Department eventually shifted to become more accommodating, the aims of the Natives were more or less ignored. In explaining this strict mandate, Scott Sheffield argued, “The ultimate goal of eliminating the ‘Indian’ as an entity apart from the mainstream of Canadian society remained the *raison d’être* of Indian Affairs throughout the 1930s.”<sup>219</sup> Consequently, when the LIWC and the SMS sent resolutions from their meetings to the Department and the federal and provincial governments, the only reply received was one which indicated that the resolutions had been received by the government. No indication was given, however, that anything would be done to address the issues within the resolutions.

By 1936 when Indian Affairs became a part of the Department of Mines and Resources, the administration concentrated more on the development of industry than on the social problems plaguing the First Nations populations—a move which further challenged the development of the organizations.<sup>220</sup> This shift in policy left the Department increasingly unsympathetic to the political advances of the First Nations, and seriously undermined the progress of the organizations.

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<sup>218</sup> John Leonard Taylor, *Canadian Indian Policy During the Interwar Years, 1918-1939* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1983), 170.

<sup>219</sup> R. Scott Sheffield, *The Red Man's on the Warpath: The Image of the "Indian" and the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>220</sup> Dickason, 309.

Unfortunately, the strict stance of opposition to Native political activism taken by the Department often failed to properly translate, leading to confusion among field officers.

Indian agents across the prairies were often unsure whether political gatherings on reserves should be tolerated. In attempting to gain clarification, Indian agents such as N.P. L'Heureaux of Driftpile, Alberta wrote to the secretary of the Department, A.F. MacKenzie, and asked whether or not the LIWC was allowed to hold meetings on the reserve. The Department replied vaguely that "this organization has never been officially recognized"—a response that likely failed to rectify any confusion.<sup>221</sup> Even if Indian agents were unsure of the Department's stance on the developing organizations, the Native populations were not confused in the least. Tootoosis insisted that the Department's strategy of non-recognition was designed to frustrate the members of the organizations so that, in time, the members would eventually grow tired of their lack of progress and give up.<sup>222</sup>

If internal divisions brought on by generational and geographic divides and government action to oppose the development of the organizations were not enough to be seriously detrimental to the success of Native politics, the onset of the Second World War was. Canada's participation in the war overseas ensured two things: first, the war guaranteed that the Canadian government would retract any spending on mandates that were a lower priority, and second, Native people would temporarily abandon their political efforts in favour of a steady paycheck. Although by the late 1930s Native organizations were still not receiving the attention they demanded from Department officials, the war divided the attention of the Department even further. Describing the effect of the war on the Department, Sheffield insisted, "...the IAB [Indian Affairs Branch] was utterly

<sup>221</sup> LAC, RG10, Reel 11340, Volume 3211, File 527,787, pt. 1. Formation of a Canadian League of Indians by F.O. Loft of the Six Nations Band. 1919-1935, letters between N.P. L'Heureaux and A.F. MacKenzie, March 21-24, 1934.

<sup>222</sup> John Tootoosis, September 11, 1977.

unprepared for the new strains and demands that the war would place on its infrastructure, on its charges, on its jurisdiction, and on its image of the 'Indian.'”<sup>223</sup> The result of this strain was an almost complete reversion back to early Department attitudes which ignored Native organization.

With the attention of the Canadian government directed solely at the war effort, First Nations and Métis too began to shift their focus away from activism. For the First Nations, many individuals were anxious to get away from their reserves and travel to more exciting places after years of having their mobility restricted. For the Métis, whose primary concerns in the organization were to secure steady employment, the war offered enough opportunity to warrant less attention in political organization. Ross has explained that for many Métis people, improving the economic conditions of the Métis people was the sole reason for becoming politically active, and, thus, if they were profiting from the war, they had no need to be involved in the organizations.<sup>224</sup> An early member of the SMS, Lawrence Pritchard, remained as a testament to the practicality of the political movement. Though he felt strongly about the Métis cause, for Pritchard the most pressing issue was providing for his family. During his involvement with the society Pritchard reasoned that political involvement was the best way to secure the employment he needed to survive. Upon securing a decent job with the railway, however, Pritchard quickly abandoned his political pursuits. Exuding some feelings of regret as he reflected on his decision to end his involvement with the SMS, Pritchard explained quite simply that providing for his family took all of his time.<sup>225</sup>

The dramatic decrease in the membership of Native organizations during the war speaks volumes about the nature of Native political goals. Many leaders such as Tootoosis held high hopes for the organizations as tools for achieving Aboriginal rights and self-government, yet the

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<sup>223</sup> Sheffield, 42.

<sup>224</sup> Joe Ross, n.d.

<sup>225</sup> Personal interview with Lawrence Joseph Pritchard by Judy M. Thibodeau, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, February 19, 1984. Transcript available at the Virtual Museum of Métis History <[www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)>, accessed April 16, 2008.

foremost concerns of the members were to gain access to basic rights and services. Few members of the Native communities could afford to pursue political ideals when they were destitute. For many, therefore, political goals were subject to practical priorities.

While the conditions necessary for political organization in Saskatchewan certainly contributed to the development of First Nations and Métis organizations, outside political influences also provided the necessary impetus. Through the development of the Western League, the Protective Association, the Association of Saskatchewan Indians and the Saskatchewan Métis Society, we can see how varied the movement was, not only between organizations, but between leaders as well. In fact, in analyzing the priorities of the organizations as they evolved throughout the interwar period, it is possible to see the degree to which individual leaders had an impact on the movements themselves. In many cases it was the dedication and charisma of political leaders that allowed the movement to persevere despite heavy challenges. While generational and geographical divisions and government indifference to Native activism were detrimental, the arrival of the Second World War proved to be nearly insurmountable as both the Union of Saskatchewan Indians and the Métis Society of Saskatchewan declined. In the final years of the conflict, however, when membership hit all time lows in the organizations, new leaders emerged to revitalize the movement. The stamina of this political movement was possible due to the successful operationalization of political strategies and identities.

### **CHAPTER THREE: Revitalization**

Despite the serious challenges faced by Saskatchewan Native organizations throughout the interwar period, some significant steps were made in achieving political goals. In some instances

First Nations and Métis groups were able to gain tangible results for their political efforts, but more often than not their political achievements were less salient. It would be easy to argue that the organizations essentially failed to meet their goals in the interwar period, but it must also be remembered that these organizations operated in an environment that was not conducive to massive change in Native policies. The political goals established by Native groups, which included access to education, adequate health care, an independent land base, steady employment and proper implementation of treaty rights may seem like simple requests, and in many ways they were, but the Canadian state was simply not prepared to grant these requests at the time. Leery about the basis of Aboriginal rights on which these requests were proposed, the Canadian government was uneasy about setting precedents.

Nevertheless, success in varying degrees was manifested in such things as changes in government responses to political activism, increased abilities on behalf of Native organizations to oppose government restrictions, strengthening of the political identities and perseverance of political organizations. Each of these triumphs contributed not only to the progress of a specific political organization, but also to subsequent political efforts over time. These accomplishments, therefore, brought hope to the movement after years of opposition and maintenance of the status quo in Native policies. Drawing on theories of Native and non-Native politics, this chapter seeks to elucidate how activists and government officials interacted on a political level according to their own understandings of politics. And it will further describe how many of the achievements of First Nations and Métis activism in this era can be attributed to the successful enactment of political strategies that were directed in response to the tactics of the Canadian government. Finally, in highlighting how the success of Native organizations resulted from the political strategies

implemented, this chapter will reveal the ways in which Native groups were able to adapt to changing political and social circumstances in order to maintain their political identities.

To counter the challenges facing Native activism, and to achieve a degree of political success, Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis groups throughout the interwar era needed to transform their political ideals into effective strategies. Yet, it must be remembered that Native activism existed within a system of liberal democracy, and therefore the inconsistencies between Native and non-Native systems of politics had to be addressed. In this study, the term liberal democracy is used to describe the political organization embraced by the Canadian state in which a balance of individual liberties and freedoms, as well as the empowerment of the masses had been maintained. The system of democratically electing Members of Parliament to represent the Canadian body politic is, in this study, contrasted to traditional forms of Native political practices in which consensus was favoured over democracy, and individual authority over a group was not practiced.<sup>226</sup>

To achieve a clear sense of how Native and non-Native political systems interacted and co-existed, it is important to first understand how Saskatchewan Native political action existed both as an oppositional force to liberal democracy, yet also acted within liberal politics by attempting to have Native political priorities included in the existing system. On the one hand, by its very definition activism existed as an oppositional force, designed to counter another power. In the case of Saskatchewan Native political activism, the force which Native people resisted through political activism was the imposition of liberal politics.

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<sup>226</sup> Also important for consideration was the gradual shift that occurred in how liberal politics was applied to Native peoples in Canada throughout the interwar years. Prior to the Second World War the tenets of liberal politics that championed equality and freedom were embraced by Canadians, but due to prevailing social theories, were not applied to Native populations. First Nations and Métis people, therefore, were not beneficiaries of this policy. After the war, however, increasingly, though still with some reservation, these tenets of liberal politics began to include Native peoples, yet in many cases equality meant the abolition of special status and rights.



Saskatchewan First Nations, specifically those who were politically organizing in the north, were opposed to the ways in which provincial and federal governments attempted to impose non-Native styles of politics on Native associations. In 1946 for example, at a Saskatoon conference attended by First Nations delegates and non-Native government representatives, Chief Almighty Voice of One Arrow Reserve expressed his frustration with the format of the conference meeting. According to Almighty Voice, that the meeting was being convened in English with many non-Natives present gave the impression that the meeting was not actually for the Indians, but rather for the white men.<sup>227</sup> This directly opposed the main purpose of the convention, which was to allow First Nations delegates to determine the future of their political organizations. Only a week before, Chief Gamble had expressed similar frustration with the arrangement of meetings with non-Native representatives. This was not surprising as according to Pitsula, “the format [of the meetings] was set by non-Indians, whites occupied the chairs at the head table, [and] the Indian consensus style of discussion and decision making was not followed. Instead, resolutions were moved, seconded, debated, and voted, with victory going to the majority and defeat to the minority.”<sup>228</sup>

On the other hand, while Saskatchewan Native political activism developed as a form of resistance to actions of the Canadian state, and First Nations leaders often expressed their frustration with non-Native styles of politics, organizations often followed the legal framework of the Canadian political system in their development. This tendency to adopt unfamiliar political processes occurred in large part because Natives believed it was the only way for their political goals to be taken seriously. Native people resigned themselves to utilizing the necessary political

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<sup>227</sup> SAB, Indians of North America–Societies R-834, file 37, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, The Record of the Establishment of Indian Unity in Saskatchewan, “Minutes of the Conference of Saskatchewan Indians Hold in the Barry Hotel, in the City of Saskatoon, in the Province of Saskatchewan, on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 1946, 61.

<sup>228</sup> James M. Pitsula, “The CCF Government and the Formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians,” *Prairie Forum* 19 (2): 1994, 139.

means to achieve their ultimate goals. As such, although “western political thought is not necessarily the language of the world’s indigenous peoples... [Indigenous peoples] have often been constrained to use it...”<sup>229</sup>

Drawing on French philosopher Michel de Certeau’s ideas of power relations, it is possible to get a better sense of how Natives and non-Natives in Saskatchewan interacted on a political scale. In his work, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau proposed that politically weaker people utilized two basic approaches in resisting dominant powers. The first approach, known as *strategy*, was associated with power structures and dominant institutions, while the second approach, known as *tactic*, was used by people within power structures to oppose domination. Adapting these notions to specific cases of Indigenous societies, political scientist Sean Patrick Eudaily outlined how tactical and strategic resistance were used by subordinate Indigenous groups to oppose the actions of a more powerful group.

According to Eudaily strategic resistance was generally associated with types of struggles that entirely rejected the dominant system. Strategic resistance did not originate from within the system of the other, but rather was derived from elements not predetermined by the dominating power. In Eudaily’s opinion, this break away from the dominant power created an entirely oppositional dynamic whereby the political aims of the dominant and oppressed groups became irreconcilable. The end result, therefore, demanded that one group overpower the other.

Tactical resistance, on the other hand, was “the practice of taking those identities and liberties produced by the dominant form of power as tools for said power’s subversion.”<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Duncan Ivison, Paul Patton and Will Sanders, Eds. *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>230</sup> Sean Patrick Eudaily, *The Present Politics of the Past: Indigenous Legal Activism and Resistance to (Neo) Liberal Governmentality* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 12; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* Trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California, 1984), 29-30.

Tactical resistance allowed subordinate groups to work within the system imposed on them to employ a form of resistance. Generally speaking the political activities of Saskatchewan Native groups more closely followed the notion of tactical resistance than strategic resistance. Far from attempting to overthrow the entire Canadian political and social systems, Native groups instead worked within the rules already established by the Canadian state.

Accepting the existence and importance of the system in terms of civil and human rights, established laws and so on, Native political organizations drew up the legal documentation required to legitimize their associations in the eyes of Department and government administrators. In complying, to a certain extent, with government rules, Native organizations ensured that they would be taken seriously by the Department. Had they simply revolted, the Canadian government would have labelled them rebels and suppressed the insurrection. While this practice may seem to indicate total acquiescence to the Canadian political system, Native populations understood the necessity of maintaining a non-threatening appearance, and as a result, were able to attain a degree of influence by strategically adapting their political methods.

That being said, pervasive differences did exist between the political ideals of Native leaders within this era. Ahenakew and Tootoosis, for example, differed entirely in their political ideologies. Ahenakew believed that Native organizations should work within the dominant system, while Tootoosis felt strongly that First Nations groups should maintain political independence. Largely reflective of their backgrounds, these two men proposed political ideals that were in tune with their social and political places in Native society. Ahenakew, tied firmly to the church, was politically moderate, and sought to rectify the poor economic conditions of First Nations peoples without upsetting the legal structures that were already in place for Saskatchewan First Nations. In this regard, Ahenakew essentially viewed political activism as a way to achieve

equality in the larger society, not isolation. Tootoosis, on the other hand, hailed from a different legal standpoint, and in many ways was able to propose radical political goals that were inconceivable for Ahenakew as a member of the church. A firm believer in the need for Native control over Native affairs, Tootoosis felt that even the inclusion of Native political aspirations in the Canadian system would lead to cultural minimalization, and therefore he called for Native systems of governance to be established.

Chief Joe Dreaver and Dan Kennedy, both of the Association of Saskatchewan Indians, more closely associated with the ideals of Ahenakew and proposed a closer relationship with the general population of Saskatchewan. These two leaders even went as far as to promote the issue of the First Nations' franchise. Kennedy felt that being allowed to vote in provincial and federal elections would help to repair issues of inferiority and segregation faced by First Nations people and would further promote equality.<sup>231</sup> The political goals of Dreaver and Kennedy, specifically regarding the franchise, though not shared by all the members in the ASI, nevertheless made the other political associations a little wary of the actions of the organization.

Maintaining similar goals and practices, the PAIT also aspired to hold a place in the political system of Canada. In fact, in a brief formulated by the executive members of the PAIT in 1945, the organization used the basic tenets of democracy to put forward its political goals. Arguing that "the right to be heard by the representatives of the Crown... [and] the right to protection as a minority group [were] established by the Indian Treaties, and [were] inherent in the rights of all people in a democratic country," the PAIT attempted to establish itself within the Canadian political system. Essentially, the members of the group did not see their special status as

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<sup>231</sup> F. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 65; Pitsula, "The CCF Government," 136.

minorities as incompatible with Canadian politics, and as such felt that First Nations deserved to be heard by governments, and demanded a legitimized political voice.<sup>232</sup>

For the Métis, there was a clear desire to work within the established political schemes, but as with the First Nations, leaders disagreed with the degree to which Natives should acquiesce to the outside system. Nevertheless, members of the SMS, particularly in the 1940s, saw the value in understanding the political issues and appealed to the Métis to better educate themselves about Canadian politics. Speaking to the attendees of the 1946 Métis Convention, SMS president Fred De Laronde argued,

First and foremost qualifications to higher citizenship is to have a proper sense of public duty and responsibility. Second, is a knowledge of our history and constitutional development of the country, and of the functions and responsibilities of the different forms of government in Canada. Failing this, too often those taking an interest in Municipal or Provincial questions are accused of ulterior motives, or, in other words, for what's in it. I think if more of our people would study these different forms of Government, they would be likely to cast a more intelligent vote and cast no reflections on those taking an interest in political questions.<sup>233</sup>

Appealing to the potential of all Métis to become politically responsible citizens, De Laronde exposed his personal belief that the Métis should aim for political equality within the Canadian system.

While many Native political leaders attempted to find a political common ground with Canadian governments, Tootoosis' political ideals drew on the incompatibilities of Native and non-Native systems of governance. In the end, Tootoosis' goals proved to be unattainable. With neither the support nor capital to reject the Canadian political system, Tootoosis resigned himself

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<sup>232</sup> SAB, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of Premier, "Indians", R-834, xlv 5, *Brief of the Protective Association for Indians and Their Treaties to the Honourable the Minister of Indian Affairs for Canada*, 27-28.

<sup>233</sup> SAB, J.H. Sturdy Papers, M14 file 198, "Métis Conference, 1946," Conference Proceedings, 23.

to the notion that Saskatchewan Natives would have to work within the established structure in order to achieve any of their goals. According to Eudaily, however, the question still remained as to whether or not there was space within Canadian political theory for the ambitions of Native populations.<sup>234</sup>

Ultimately, just because Native groups attempted to work within the Canadian political system in order to receive legitimization of their political efforts, it did not necessarily follow that the Canadian government would allow Native organizations into the established system.

Anthropologist Katherine Pettipas has argued that “the vision of the Canadian nation-state in the 1870s was not based on a concept of political, economic, or cultural pluralism.”<sup>235</sup> This vision, which continued to apply into the interwar period and arguably even beyond, held that the political, economic and social ideals of Native populations would be replaced by the dominant systems of the non-Native population, and therefore the political role of Native people in Canada would become irrelevant. Nevertheless, Native groups continued to vie for their place in political organization.

If there was room within the existing Canadian political system for Native politics, then the actions of Native leaders would, in theory, be acknowledged and some action would be taken to address Native concerns. If there was not room, however, and the Canadian state was unwilling to compromise to help Natives achieve their political goals, then Native activists would be forced to overthrow the Canadian system, defect from it or simply abandon their objectives. In their

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<sup>234</sup> Ivison et al., 2. Duncan Ivison, is a professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney, and studies the history of political thought. Paul Patton similarly teaches Philosophy at the University of Sydney, specializing on the implications of native title in Australia. Will Sanders studies Australian public policy as it relates to indigenous populations and is a Research Fellow at the Australian National University Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research.

<sup>235</sup> Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 17.

compilation of discussions of political theory and indigenous rights, philosophers Duncan Ivison and Paul Patton and public policy researcher Will Sanders have suggested that in understanding the interaction between liberal and indigenous political theories, one must first understand how liberal political theory contributed to the colonization and subjugation of indigenous peoples. If the political policies of liberal states advocated colonization and political, cultural and economic domination over indigenous groups, it would follow that liberal states viewed indigenous politics as illegitimate. What needed to be determined then was whether or not it was possible for a liberal democratic state to think differently about the relationship with indigenous people and acknowledge indigenous political ideas.<sup>236</sup>

As noted in chapter two, the attitudes of the government hindered the progress of the organizations substantially. Initially when Native organizations began to develop the idea of including Native political ideals into the greater Canadian system it was either acknowledged and then promptly rejected or simply dismissed as a non-issue. Drawing on his experiences with a variety of subordinate peoples around the world, political and social scientist, James Scott has explained these government reactions of disallowing or denying Native political activities by outlining two strategies. The first strategy employed by government officials attempted to pacify the group by allowing specified forms of political action. It was hoped that by relieving the political tension and granting some form of political expression, rebellion would be avoided.<sup>237</sup>

Political organizations, though not encouraged in the interwar era, were tolerated to a certain extent, though under direct observation by the Department and local police. While there is no evidence that the Métis organizations in Saskatchewan were observed, the Department, through the

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<sup>236</sup> Ivison et al., 2.

<sup>237</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 186.

efforts of Indian agents and farm instructors, strictly monitored any perceived political gatherings of Saskatchewan First Nations.

The RCMP similarly took on the role of observing the situation on reserves and throughout the spring and summer of 1931 the political activities of First Nations were meticulously recorded. RCMP officers consistently patrolled reserves such as Sweetgrass, Moosimin, Red Pheasant and Meadow Lake, among others, specifically to evaluate the extent of Loft's prior influence.<sup>238</sup> In an RCMP report dated July 14, 1931 from the Meadow Lake detachment, Corporal J. Small reported interviewing Meadow Lake Chief Matchee in hopes of gaining information about any communication with Loft and the League of Indians of Canada during the 1920s. Chief Matchee replied that he had paid Loft approximately three dollars on three separate occasions between August 1921 and December 1923—an action seen as threatening by the Department as it encouraged Loft's political agitation.<sup>239</sup>

Ultimately, as long as the gatherings were not menacing, they were not forcibly stopped by the Department or the RCMP. Upon any perceived risk of threat, however, strict action was taken to prevent further campaigning. Indeed, in a move to thwart the efforts of Loft, Indian Commissioner W.M. Graham informed D.C. Scott in 1921 that "Loft made a visit to Battleford, and held there a mass meeting of Indians, of whom I understand about 600 attended, many of them journeying long distances. This meeting elected Officers in the organisations." Clearly worried that these activities were getting out of hand, Graham went on to suggest that the Department should

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<sup>238</sup> LAC, RG10, Vol.3211, File, 527,787, pt. 1, "Formation of a Canadian League of Indians by F.O. Loft of the Six Nations Band", 1919-1935.

<sup>239</sup> LAC RG10, Vol. 3211, File 527,787, pt. 1 "Formation of a Canadian League of Indians", RCMP Report, July 14, 1931.



“prohibit this man from visiting Reserves for meetings of such a nature must tend to unsettle the Indians.”<sup>240</sup>

Loft eventually felt the brunt of the Department’s lack of sympathy for Native political action, when, after being labelled an agitator, he was threatened with enfranchisement. Although framed in a positive light in a letter from the Assistant Deputy Superintendent, enfranchisement was viewed as a way in which to silence Loft.<sup>241</sup> Once Loft was no longer considered an Indian under the *Indian Act*, the Department rationalized that Loft could no longer be a political representative for the Indians. Although the activities of Loft were clearly curtailed by the Department, it seems that Loft’s case was unusual. Generally speaking, most political activities were monitored but rarely interrupted.

Along with this toleration of Native political activities, Scott has pointed out a second strategy employed by governments, which was to ignore such activities altogether. Scott reasoned that often governments dismissed the political actions of Native people by delegitimizing them as a form of political action. He went on to argue that, because Native political events were seen to “[take] place at a level we rarely recognize as political” governments have typically overlooked them.<sup>242</sup> These attitudes clearly came through in Department correspondence throughout the interwar period which outlined the strategies of wilful ignorance to be taken by Department officials. For instance, after receiving a letter from Loft detailing the extent to which First Nations issues in Saskatchewan and Manitoba were not being addressed by the Department, Graham wrote to D.C. Scott and expressed concern that a potentially unending channel of communication had

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<sup>240</sup> LAC RG10 Vol. 3211, File 527,787, Pt. 1. “Formation of a Canadian League of Indians by F.O. Loft of the Six Nations Band”, 1919-1935, letter from W.M. Graham to D.C. Scott, November 29, 1921.

<sup>241</sup> LAC RG10, Vol. 3211, File, 527,787, pt. 1, “Formation of a Canadian League of Indians by F.O. Loft of the Six Nations Band”, 1919-1935, letter to F.O. Loft from A.S. Williams for Assistant Deputy and Secretary, November 4, 1920.

<sup>242</sup> Scott, 198.

been opened between the Commissioner and Loft. Graham had in fact replied to Loft explaining how the so-called outstanding issues had been resolved, but worried that Loft would continue to write to the Department with further concerns.<sup>243</sup> D.C. Scott advised Graham to inform Loft that he could not be recognized as a legitimate communicator for the Indian populations in hopes that Loft would cease communication. Graham had Assistant Deputy J.D. McLean write to Loft stating that, “the Department is unable to recognize you as the channel of communication demanding information in regard to the Department’s administration of the affairs of the bands referred to (Mistawasis and Valley River).”<sup>244</sup>

This intentional non-recognition of Loft’s authority as a political leader supports James Scott’s contention that the political activities of Native peoples were constructed as illegitimate. Eudaily has pointed out that many scholars view political activism, even in the form of organizations, as a non-contentious counterpart to political activity.<sup>245</sup> Eudaily proposed that political activism, which normally took on the form of legal activity and government lobbying, was criticized for its inability to enact change, and therefore, has been disregarded as a legitimate form of political action.<sup>246</sup> Scott has posited, however, that these unorganized events are in fact the foundation upon which more dominant and organized forms of activism are based. Scott has asked, “how...could we understand the open break represented by the civil rights movement or the black power movement in the 1960s without understanding the offstage discourse among black students, clergymen, and their parishioners?”<sup>247</sup>

The existence of Saskatchewan political activism within the larger Canadian political system may dilute the potency of Native politics to a certain extent, but it is inaccurate to believe

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<sup>243</sup> LAC RG10 Vol. 3211, file 527, 787, pt. 1. Letter from W.M. Graham to D.C. Scott, November 14, 1921.

<sup>244</sup> LAC RG10, Vol. 3211, file 527, 787, pt. 1. Letter from J.D. McLean to F.O. Loft, November 25, 1921.

<sup>245</sup> Eudaily, 60.

<sup>246</sup> Eudaily, 60.

<sup>247</sup> Scott, 199.

that Native movements have been completely depoliticized due to this relationship. Recognizing the restrictions resulting from their place in liberal politics, Native activists adapted their strategies and continued to search for their political voice. That First Nations and Métis organizations made progress in some of their political aspirations indicated that the organizations were not depoliticized by liberal politics, but eventually gained political power by working within the already established system.

For the Métis, the involvement of non-Native professionals and politicians proved that Native political power could be procured by interacting with the Canadian political system. The interest shown in the association by non-Natives Wilna Moore, T.H. Newlove, Zacharias Hamilton, Percy Hodges, E.D Noonan, Morris Shumiatcher and T.C. Douglas, among others, brought mixed results, but nonetheless provided the association with valuable expertise. Outside involvement provided access to legal knowledge that the SMS would otherwise not have had, yet such involvement was, at times, also a hindrance to the movement because individuals often used the SMS for their own purposes. As described earlier, non-Native politician Wilna Moore had both a positive and negative impact on the SMS. Although Moore contributed a highly coveted degree of political knowledge to the association, the cutthroat nature of the aspiring politician also contributed to the decline of the SMS.

Moore's involvement in the organization as a non-Native individual was not out of the ordinary, as earlier in the organization's history original SMS member Ed Klyne sought out the expertise of Regina lawyer Newlove to aid with the development of the organization. Believing that Newlove could provide the legal knowledge needed for the SMS to begin advancing their grievances to the government, Klyne went to visit the lawyer with four or five other Métis in

1934.<sup>248</sup> Along with helping the group draft a constitution for the new organization, Newlove also informed the men that they should ask the secretary of the Saskatchewan Historical Society, Zacharias Hamilton, for information on the scrip issue.<sup>249</sup>

Hamilton was eager to help the SMS investigate their claim and quickly associated himself with the organization. By 1939, when a delegation of SMS members met with Premier Patterson to discuss the political concerns of the Saskatchewan Métis, Hamilton had decided to act on behalf of the organization.<sup>250</sup> Some Métis leaders felt that Hamilton overstepped his boundaries and began to question whether Hamilton's involvement with the SMS was beneficial. Hamilton's involvement with the provincial Liberal party had other Métis individuals on edge, and many felt that his motivations for helping the society were disingenuous.<sup>251</sup>

SMS activist Thomas Major, for example, was convinced that Hamilton acted more in the interest of the provincial government by attempting to sway SMS leaders to direct their concerns to the federal government rather than the province. Knowing that the provincial government would propose the establishment of Métis colonies as a means of relief, Hamilton worried that the inevitable failure of the settlements would embarrass the province.<sup>252</sup> And though Hamilton's push for the Métis to address the federal rather than provincial government seems ill-informed, a 1939 Supreme Court decision provided the potential for change in the responsibility of the Métis people. In the decision the court ruled that Eskimos were Indians within the meaning of section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, making them a federal responsibility. This decision overruled the stipulations

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<sup>248</sup> Interview of Thomas Major by Murray Dobbin, Regina, Saskatchewan, March 14, 1978. Transcript accessed from the Virtual Museum of Métis History <[www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)>. Accessed April 16, 2008.

<sup>249</sup> Murray Dobbin, "Métis Struggles of the Twentieth Century: The Saskatchewan Métis Society—1935-1950. Part One: Early Beginnings," *New Breed Magazine*, 1978, 18; Interview with Major.

<sup>250</sup> Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

<sup>251</sup> Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

<sup>252</sup> Thomas Major, March 14, 1978.

of the *Indian Act* which had excluded Eskimos, and therefore raised the question of whether Métis could fall under a similar ruling.<sup>253</sup> Ultimately Hamilton's involvement in the SMS resulted in a refusal by many Métis to trust the actions and advice of the outsider, yet Hamilton certainly provided a measure of outside support that, despite its shortcomings, brought a degree of attention to the society and the goals of the Métis.

Hamilton's strategies to save the provincial government from embarrassment failed, however, and by the late 1930s when the media began to draw awareness to the deplorable conditions of the Métis, and the public finally began to react, the economic concerns of the Métis were finally taken seriously by the provincial government under Patterson. In 1938, in response to continued calls for a solution to the economic decline of the Métis, the Minister of Municipal Affairs appointed a one-man commission to address the situation.<sup>254</sup> An indication of the Patterson government's commitment to resolving the Métis problem, however, was demonstrated in the choice made for the commissioner. Lamenting that the "appointment was little more than a public relations exercise aimed primarily at quelling the dissatisfaction of the municipalities," Historian F. Laurie Barron revealed that "the man chosen was W.E. Read, whose only qualification for the position was that, for some 58 years, he had owned a general store in Fort Qu'Appelle."<sup>255</sup>

Nevertheless, by 1939 Patterson's provincial government initiated a settlement plan at Green Lake which was designed to alleviate the poverty of the Saskatchewan Métis. The arrangement, which was to provide ninety-nine year leases on blocks of land in twelve settlements near Green Lake, was seen by the province as providing the necessary land base for the Métis to

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<sup>253</sup> John Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Calgary: Fifth House Publishing, 2007), 27.

<sup>254</sup> F. Laurie Barron, "The CCF and the Development of Métis Colonies in Southern Saskatchewan During the Premiership of T.C. Douglas, 1944-1961," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 10:2 (1990): 248.

<sup>255</sup> Barron, "The CCF and the Development of Métis Colonies," 248.

gain an economic foothold.<sup>256</sup> While the success of this settlement plan in providing economic self-sufficiency for Saskatchewan Métis is easily debatable, as it was essentially a temporary relief plan and social experiment more than it was a sustainable solution, the existence of the plan itself was certainly a noteworthy achievement for the SMS. The Green Lake Settlement represented a final recognition from the province that the Métis populations required economic assistance, and after years of lobbying for attention both through unofficial channels and legitimate political organizations, the Métis had secured tangible results. Even further, the settlement plan signified a step toward the formation of a Métis policy in Saskatchewan.<sup>257</sup>

Like Hamilton, Regina lawyers Hodges and Noonan similarly brought mixed results to the SMS when they were hired to investigate the Métis' claim to scrip in 1940. Convinced that the professionals would be able to establish the Métis' claim, the SMS was disappointed when, after a lengthy investigation, the Métis were told they had no case. Hodges and Noonan, in viewing the issue, attempted to determine whether or not the Métis had a legal and/or moral claim to land through scrip. According to Barron,

Essentially, Noonan and Hodges concluded categorically that the Métis did not have, nor had they ever had, any Aboriginal rights enforceable in the courts. Indeed, while they agreed with Hamilton that the Métis had a moral claim, they insisted that even that claim had already been settled by the dominion government.<sup>258</sup>

Undeterred by the damaging outcome of their political strategy to lobby the federal government for their cause, the SMS continued to seek the attention and aid of outsiders. By the 1940s the SMS was struggling to overcome the aftermath of their political missteps as well as the effects of deep geographical divisions. Diverging political attitudes had existed between the

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<sup>256</sup> Weinstein, 26.

<sup>257</sup> Barron, "The CCF and the Development of Métis Colonies," 250.

<sup>258</sup> Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 36.

northern and southern Métis for years, but by 1943 this rivalry directly resulted in the formation of a northern political organization, the Saskatchewan Métis Association.<sup>259</sup> This rival organization signified two things for the Saskatchewan Métis. First, it officially proved the disunity amongst the provincial Métis population, and made any potential unification unlikely; and second, it represented significant politicization in an area that had previously been considered apolitical.

It was in this political context that the CCF became involved in Métis political activism soon after Douglas' election to power in 1944. Though primarily concerned with First Nations political organizations, the CCF was finally convinced, in 1945 to also address the Métis situation. Although Douglas is often credited for initiating talks with the provincial Métis population, Fred De Laronde, who was elected president of the SMS in 1945, had actually petitioned Douglas to meet with the SMS. In a series of letters written to Douglas (most of which went unanswered), De Laronde expressed interest in meeting with the Premier to discuss Métis issues and political goals. Though Douglas was genuinely concerned about Métis conditions, he was not prepared to respond to De Laronde and call a meeting with the SMS.<sup>260</sup>

Douglas' lack of response was surprising considering Douglas and De Laronde shared many ideals of Métis politics. Both men strongly believed that the unification of the Métis was needed to accomplish any political goals, as it would be impossible for separate groups to have their voices heard. Frustrated by a lack of response from Douglas, De Laronde, in a bid to force the premier to call a meeting with the Métis, elicited the aid of several non-Native politicians. E.L. Bowerman, Member of Parliament for Prince Albert was one such politician who wrote to Douglas regarding the Métis situation. Unlike De Laronde's letters, however, Bowerman received a prompt

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<sup>259</sup> Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 37.

<sup>260</sup> Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 37.

response from the premier with the promise that “Mr. Valteau [Minister of Social Welfare] and other members of cabinet are taking up the matter of the Métis Society...”<sup>261</sup>

G.F. Van Eaton, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, similarly appealed to the premier on behalf of the SMS. In his letter, dated September 2, 1945, Van Eaton discussed issues such as funding for the Métis people, the recent hail damage to crops and the possibility of Douglas meeting with the SMS to discuss Métis conditions.<sup>262</sup> As with Bowerman, Douglas’ response to Van Eaton was timely and reflected many of the same sentiments. In both cases, the men were assured that proper action was being taken with the Métis. Essentially Douglas’ responses to Bowerman and Van Eaton indicated that Douglas was not opposed to meeting with the Métis, but rather simply had his own schedule for such a meeting. By 1946 the CCF was ready to take on the role of revitalizing and regrouping both the First Nations and Métis organizations, although Douglas proved to be significantly more interested in the political situation of the First Nations.

Douglas’ political support for First Nations groups as opposed to the Métis is interesting and unexpected for a politician as First Nations in Saskatchewan were not able to vote, and therefore could not politically support Douglas, whereas the Métis population were enfranchised and thus had something tangible to offer Douglas in exchange for his support. In explaining Douglas’ strategies, Barron has argued that Douglas believed “an Indian organization would serve the interests of the provincial government in that it could articulate Indian grievances and demands and, in doing so, legitimize provincial concerns pertaining to the federal administration of Indian Affairs.”<sup>263</sup> This strategy of attempting to alert the federal government to Native issues was not

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<sup>261</sup> SAB, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, “Métis,” R-33.1, file xl, 859 a (44), letter from T.C. Douglas to E.L. Bowerman, M.P., September 25, 1945.

<sup>262</sup> SAB, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, “Métis,” R-33.1, file xl, 859 a (44), letter from G.P. Van Eaton to T.C. Douglas, September 2, 1945.

<sup>263</sup> Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 64.



unique to Douglas according to Barron, the SMS was able to secure a \$10,000 grant from the Patterson government to pursue its land claim against the federal government in the late 1930s.

Barron has argued,

The land claims issue was predicated on the understanding that the main responsibility for the Métis rested not with the provincial government but with the dominion... This was tantamount to absolving the province of all responsibility for addressing the everyday problems of the Métis. Patterson, undoubtedly sensing the opportunity to offload the whole matter onto the federal government, probably had no hesitation in making the \$10,000 grant...<sup>264</sup>

In spite of his political strategies, Douglas did maintain genuine concern for the wellbeing of the Métis population, and as such Douglas called a Conference for the Métis in 1946 which was designed to address the faltering unification of the Métis people throughout the province.<sup>265</sup> The Métis Convention, which was held at the Regina Court House on July 30, 1946, reflected the desire the CCF had to “revitalize the Saskatchewan Métis Society (SMS)...or perhaps even create a new provincial organization.”<sup>266</sup> In explaining the need for new life in the movement, the Chairman of the proceedings, non- Native CCF administrator, Dr. Morris C. Shumiatcher, reasoned that “much of the energy and leadership of the organization had been siphoned off as a result of the war and there were deep divisions in the Society, principally between the southerners who wanted the organization centred in Regina and those in the north who favoured Saskatoon.”<sup>267</sup> De Laronde expressed similar sentiments when he remarked that cooperation “has always been my idea among the Métis people, co-operation is something that I have been working for, and we are all fighting

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<sup>264</sup> Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 36.

<sup>265</sup> F. Laurie Barron, “Introduction to Document Six: The CCF and the Saskatchewan Métis Society,” *Native Studies Review* 10 no. 1 (1995): 89; Wesley Budd, *History of Métis Organizations of Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research and Curriculum Development, n.d. Available at the Virtual Museum of Métis History, <[www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)>, accessed October 7, 2007, 18.

<sup>266</sup> Barron, “Introduction to Document Six,” 89.

<sup>267</sup> Sturdy Papers, “Métis Conference, 1946,” Conference Proceedings, 2.

for the one cause...You know we have got to co-operate. Unless you do that you are going to be scattered and you will get nowhere.”<sup>268</sup>

Calling on the Métis to “band together” and “elect representatives who can speak for, not just a group, a segment of the Métis people, but for all Métis people in this Province,” Schumiatcher expressed Douglas’ belief that the Métis could be politically successful.<sup>269</sup> Drawing attention to the way in which the organization had been used by politicians in the past, Shumiatcher went on to remark that the government did not wish to have any influence over the organization.<sup>270</sup> In fact, the provincial government expressed the desire for the organization to be non-partisan and non-sectarian so that the political and religious differences existing between the provincial Métis population would not interfere with the effectiveness of the organization.<sup>271</sup> These ideals seemed to offer hope for the Métis that their political organization would gain focus and power, but the convention in reality offered little in the way of tangible aid for the SMS, and the organization remained unorganized despite the efforts made to revitalize the movement. Although the meeting represented a huge step in the direction of government recognition of Métis concerns and political goals, Douglas’ lack of commitment to the Métis cause paired with internal divisions amongst the Métis led to the disintegration of the movement.

In the end, despite the disingenuous motivations of some professionals, the failed policies of politicians and the ultimate disintegration of the organized movement in the late 1940s, the involvement of non-Natives in the SMS contributed to some significant accomplishments. Apart from granting the Métis access to important political knowledge, this outside support also sent the message that the political efforts of the organization were legitimate. This legitimization in turn,

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<sup>268</sup> Sturdy Papers, “Métis Conference, 1946,” Conference Proceedings, 13-14.

<sup>269</sup> Sturdy Papers, “Métis Conference, 1946,” Conference Proceedings, 4.

<sup>270</sup> Sturdy Papers, “Métis Conference, 1946,” Conference Proceedings, 4.

<sup>271</sup> Sturdy Papers, “Métis Conference, 1946,” Conference Proceedings, 5.

helped to bring attention to the Métis cause which desperately needed recognition in this era. Unfortunately for the Métis, however, legitimization of their cause did not translate well into concrete results in the 1940s, and bickering between provincial and federal governments over who was responsible for the Métis did not help the faltering movement.

While First Nations political organizations are typically not associated with outside political influence to the same degree as Métis politics, in reality non-Natives were a factor in First Nations politics as well. In Alberta, for example, the IAA was well known for the influence of non-Native members such as executive secretary John Laurie. Laurie, a high school teacher in Calgary, became involved with the IAA in the late 1930s when provincial IAA leader, Malcolm Norris expressed an explicit desire for the support of non-Natives in order to strengthen the political movement.<sup>272</sup> Laurie's involvement with the IAA soon brought increased interest from other non-Native individuals, most notably provincial politicians. Generally speaking, these individuals tended to favour assisting the IAA in a way that promoted integration with the general population, and social, economic and political advancement.<sup>273</sup> These goals, though seemingly incompatible with the focus of the IAA on treaty rights, in Laurie's opinion actually worked well together. In fact, Laurie saw the IAA's goals as promoting political power, which in turn would allow First Nations peoples to enact social and economic change in their reserve communities.<sup>274</sup>

The involvement of Laurie, and other non-Natives in the IAA should not be misinterpreted as non-Native individuals creating or controlling the entire First Nations political movement, but Meijer-Drees has insisted, that such people did have a hand in shaping the direction of the

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<sup>272</sup>Laurie Meijer-Drees, *The Indian Association of Alberta: A History of Political Action* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 42.

<sup>273</sup> Meijer-Drees, 43-44.

<sup>274</sup> Meijer-Drees, 44.

movement.<sup>275</sup> That being said, with the IAA, and other Saskatchewan First Nations organizations for that matter, there was an underlying message in the involvement of non-Natives in Native political organization—that Native people were not capable of enacting the political change they desired on their own. The influence of non-Natives in First Nations political associations, therefore, ensured that a primary focus for the organization would be the gradual integration in, or engagement with the general population. For many, this seemed to reflect a decisive break from the core goals of the First Nations political movement which was the maintenance and strengthening of distinct Aboriginal rights. This can clearly be seen in the involvement of the CCF government in Saskatchewan First Nations organizations after 1944.

According to Pitsula, the revitalization of the Native politics in the late 1940s directly resulted from First Nations' involvement in the Second World War and the election of a new provincial government. Pitsula has argued that the CCF government and Douglas in particular provided the moral and financial support necessary to revitalize First Nations political organization. Soon after his election to power, Douglas became directly involved in First Nations politics, and aligned himself with the ASI in order to develop a political plan for Saskatchewan First Nations.<sup>276</sup> United in the belief that the various First Nations organizations across the province should amalgamate, the ASI and Douglas agreed that a conference should be held.

The conference, which was held in Regina on January 4, 1946, was meant to serve as a forum in which to create one unified organization to represent all Saskatchewan First Nations. Speaking to this goal, Douglas remarked in his opening statement at the conference,

As you know, there are three or four Indian associations in this province; there may be others. Now there may be reasons for all

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<sup>275</sup> Meijer-Drees, 45.

<sup>276</sup> Pitsula, "The CCF Government," 137.

these associations, but it seems to me that you have many problems in common, and I feel sure that to present your case to the Federal Government and to ask them to find a solution—the solution necessary, you must all speak together with a single voice in a single representation.<sup>277</sup>

This ideal of uniting the organizations, however, though easily conceivable in theory, was difficult to translate in practice, as the leaders of the organizations often did not agree with the practices and political goals of the other associations. Joe Dreaver of the ASI, for example, made a significant effort during the conference to defend his organization against accusations of promoting enfranchising First Nations. Responding to Dreaver's remark, John Gambler of the PAIT retorted that there were vast differences between organizations that should not be ignored, but Gambler conceded that perhaps such differences could be set aside for the sake of unity. This comment was acceptable for the delegates attending the conference, and it was agreed that an attempt to create a united organization would continue.

Though many had high hopes for the Regina Conference, at issue was the fact that the meeting had only attracted a large number of Treaty No. 4 delegates, leaving other regions significantly underrepresented. The leaders of two of the major First Nations organizations, the ASI and the PAIT were present, yet John Tootoosis, the leader of the third organization, the NAIB was absent.<sup>278</sup> Ultimately the conference resulted in the formation of a tentative new provincial organization, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, but the uneven representation of First Nations peoples was an issue for those in attendance. In fact, upon creating the new organization and drafting a constitution, G. H. Castleden, Member of Parliament for Yorkton, highlighted the

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<sup>277</sup> SAB, Indians of North America—Societies, R-834, file 37, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, Report of the Establishment of Indian Unity in Saskatchewan, "Minutes of a Conference of the Indians of Saskatchewan, Held in the Legislative Buildings at the City of Regina, in the Province of Saskatchewan on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1946, and Convened by Honourable T.C. Douglas, Premier of Saskatchewan," 47.

<sup>278</sup> Indians of North America—Societies, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, "Minutes of a Conference of the Indians of Saskatchewan," 48-49.

need for input from the northern organization before the constitution could be finalized. Castleden suggested that the documents produced at the Regina meeting be forwarded to the meeting of the northern leaders in Duck Lake later that month.<sup>279</sup>

A week later, on January 10, 1946 the remaining First Nations leaders gathered at Duck Lake to discuss the future of First Nations political organization.<sup>280</sup> At the heart of the matter was that “there were two competing [groups] for Indian unity, one in the Treaty 6 area and one in the Treaty 4 area, with the latter supported by the CCF government.”<sup>281</sup> This government support, though embraced by delegates from the Regina Convention as a way in which to advance Native claims, was deeply resented by those at Duck Lake as an unacceptable intrusion of outsiders into Native issues. It should not be a surprise, therefore, that at the Duck Lake meeting alignment with the newly created Federation of Saskatchewan Indians was rejected and instead a partnership with the NAIB was proposed.<sup>282</sup>

According to some, “the Duck Lake meeting was a setback for the unity movement started at the Regina convention,” but it must be remembered that the unity movement established in Regina largely followed the goals of the CCF. So in essence, if the Duck Lake meeting was a setback, it was a setback for the CCF and CCF supporters, but did not necessarily impede the Native political movement as a whole. For many of the delegates at the Duck Lake meeting, the convention was an attempt by First Nations to regain control of their political movement, and publicly reject interference in the movement by outsiders. To counter the divide between the two

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<sup>279</sup> Indians of North America—Societies, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, “Minutes of a Conference of the Indians of Saskatchewan,” 52.

<sup>280</sup> Indians of North America—Societies, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, “Minutes of a Conference of the Indians of Saskatchewan.”

<sup>281</sup> Pitsula, “The CCF Government,” 140.

<sup>282</sup> Indians of North America—Societies, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, “Report on the Indian Meeting at Duck Lake, Saskatchewan on January 10, 1946,” 53.

factions, and perhaps to maintain control over the groups, Douglas proposed another meeting for the First Nations to take place in Saskatoon at the end of February 1946. The Saskatoon meeting, unlike the previous meetings at Regina and Duck Lake, boasted a better representation of the province's First Nations population, and as such had the potential to accomplish more for the movement. In fact, according to Douglas' report on the three conferences, the Saskatoon meeting attracted representatives from all ten of the Saskatchewan Indian agencies.<sup>283</sup>

The Saskatoon Conference, held at the Barry Hotel on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 1946, drew 113 delegates, a number far greater than the other conferences had attracted. And like the previous gatherings, it was impressed upon the attendees that "the Conference is not a political one; it is not called by any political party; it makes no political demands. It is called by the Provincial Government in order to help you to help yourselves."<sup>284</sup> Despite this assurance that the meeting was not called or controlled by the CCF, initially many of the same divisions emerged at the Saskatoon meeting. John Tootoosis, for instance, advocated for Saskatchewan First Nations to join Paull's NAIB rather than form a provincial organization on their own. Tootoosis held that an established international organization of First Nations, without the influence of non-Natives, would provide more for the movement than a political organization supported by Saskatchewan politicians. These sentiments continued when Paull himself attended the conference and appealed for a Saskatchewan branch of the NAIB.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> SAB, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, "Indians," R-33.1, file xlv 864 a(49). The ten agencies in Saskatchewan included: File Hills, Pelly, Qu'Appelle, Duck Lake, Battleford, Touchwood, Carlton, Crooked Lake, Onion Lake, the Pas.

<sup>284</sup> SAB, Indians of North America—Societies, R-834, file 37, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, Report of the Establishment of Indian Unity in Saskatchewan, "Minutes of the Conference of Saskatchewan Indians held in the Barry Hotel, in the City of Saskatoon, in the Province of Saskatchewan, on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 1946," 57.

<sup>285</sup> Indians of North America—Societies, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, "Minutes of the Conference of Saskatchewan Indians," 60.

Unfortunately for Paull, the NAIB leader was quickly outnumbered in a group that remained dedicated to uniting in a provincial organization without international ties. After attempting to speak to the convention about the NAIB, the delegation grew impatient. Expressing his frustration, one delegate, Allan Ahenakew remarked,

This morning, it all looked very promising; however, I thought it was settled about the federation of Indians. Now this afternoon there is a man from Vancouver—Andrew Paull—who wants to change the whole thing. If that happens, we will be here another week. ...Are we going to get together? If not, we may as well go home.<sup>286</sup>

In the end, even Tootoosis was not convinced that the NAIB represented the right political direction for Saskatchewan First Nations, and the leader threw his weight behind the formation of a provincial organization. With the majority of the delegates supporting unity, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians that had been created as a result of the Regina meeting remained, but in a slightly altered form. The most significant change made to the organization was the decision to drop ‘federation’ in the title in favour of ‘union’. It was felt that the term federation clearly linked the organization with the CCF, and the organizers were uncomfortable with such an association.

Initially it would seem that Tootoosis’ change in opinion about provincial unity was indicative of a newfound faith in non-Native participation in politics, but this was not the case. In fact, in a letter to Douglas in June 1946, politician E.A. Boden, insisted that Tootoosis was reluctant to credit the accomplishments of the USI to the CCF government.<sup>287</sup> Boden, in relaying Tootoosis’ feelings on the state of First Nations organization, insisted that the members of the USI were “not in the mood to have anyone tell them how they should run their affairs.”<sup>288</sup> Tootoosis, it seemed, even after unification, was dedicated to maintaining control of the new organization.

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<sup>286</sup> Indians of North America—Societies, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, “Minutes of the Conference of Saskatchewan Indians,” 61.

<sup>287</sup> SAB, T.C. Douglas Papers, letter from E.A. Boden to T.C. Douglas, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

<sup>288</sup> SAB, T.C. Douglas Papers, letter from E.A. Boden to T.C. Douglas, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1946



The CCF's involvement in First Nations political organization was significant as Douglas expended much time and energy in hopes of politically uniting the First Nations population. Yet the extent to which Douglas and his government truly influenced the direction and accomplishments of First Nations activism is up for debate. It is true that Douglas provided the organizations with the financial and ideological support needed to advance their ideas, but crediting Douglas for any political accomplishments made by First Nations undermines the previous political competence of the movement.<sup>289</sup> The political strategies employed by Loft, Ahenakew, Tootoosis and De Laronde, among others, to achieve political unity indicates that First Nations leaders were not oblivious to the need for unification within the province, nor were they without the skill needed to achieve such unity. It is likely, therefore, that even without the influence of Douglas in the 1940s Saskatchewan First Nations would have accomplished many of the same political goals.

Regardless of the degree to which non-Native individuals became involved in Native organizations throughout the interwar era, the fact that such influence existed at all is a testament to the ineffectiveness of the 1927 *Indian Act* amendment which had attempted to end Native political action. In the opinion of the federal government, restricting Native peoples' abilities to pursue land claims by banning the solicitation of funds for such purposes seemed like an effective way to quash Native political activities. In essence, however, the amendment failed to account for circumstances in which non-Native individuals would willingly participate in Native political organizations without directly being involved in any claims processes. And further, any perceived violation of the amendment, either by Natives (in their attempts to raise funds internally for claims), or non-Natives, were not only difficult to monitor, but almost impossible to address. The end result was that the amendment remained largely out of the minds of Saskatchewan Natives and

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<sup>289</sup> Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 78.

non-Natives involved in political movements during the interwar era, and by 1951, the attempts of the government to control Native politics were finally curtailed when the amendment was repealed.

Throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Saskatchewan Native political movement was forced to further adapt to changing political strategies and policies of the Canadian governments as well as changing world circumstances. The role of the Second World War in the Saskatchewan Native political movement has attracted much debate as historians such as Pitsula insist the conflict was categorically responsible for renewed attempts at political action, while others, like Barron and Innes assign the event a less formative role. The war was a factor for Native activism in Saskatchewan. The Second World War proved to be a serious challenge to the continuation of Native organizations. By the end of the war, however, as was seen after the First World War, “...Native leaders in many parts of the country were galvanized to organize.”<sup>290</sup>

The frustrations that mounted throughout this war were slightly different than the Native concerns after the First World War. After the First World War, Native groups felt that they had been treated as equals overseas, only to return home to feel culturally inferior. With the Second World War, Native groups were made to feel culturally inferior even in military service, and to add further insult, returned home to a similar situation. *The Red Man's on the Warpath: The Image of the 'Indian' and the Second World War* by Scott Sheffield proposed that the negative images associated with Native peoples, both from an administrative and public standpoint, contributed to the poor treatment many Native soldiers received.<sup>291</sup> The view of First Nations, despite the political achievements of the organizations prior to the war, had done little to alter the opinions held by the Canadian public and government administrators.

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<sup>290</sup> Scott Sheffield, *The Red Man's On the Warpath: The Image of the "Indian" and the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 46.

<sup>291</sup> Sheffield, 44-46.

In the war, these opinions were manifested in the treatment of First Nations soldiers who were not only denied entry into more specialized military positions such as in the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force, but, further, faced conscription into service by the Canadian government.<sup>292</sup> The racial boundaries, though not designed specifically for Native peoples, nevertheless sent the message that racial and cultural minorities were still not fully accepted in Canada. As for the Canadian government's decision to impose conscription on Native populations, this policy was seen as unacceptable by Native populations for two reasons. Firstly, Native peoples were extremely supportive of the war effort by encouraging voluntary enlistment in their communities, and supporting wartime industries and charities, and therefore, they were furious that their efforts were being overlooked.<sup>293</sup> Secondly, some First Nations had signed treaties which ensured that they would not have to fight for the Queen unless they desired to do so.<sup>294</sup> This violation became a huge source of contention amongst First Nations, and, frustrated by their treatment, First Nations began to focus on revitalizing the Native political movement once again. In this sense, while war was responsible for stalling the movement after 1939, by the end of the conflict in 1945, Native groups were ready to pick up where they had left off.

In his Master's thesis, "The Socio-political Influence of the Second World War on Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans, 1945-1960", however, Rob Innes, now a professor of Native Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, issued a caveat about going too far in attributing the war as a cause of renewed activism. Arguing against the widely accepted belief that "Indian political organizations that came into existence in Canada generally, and in Saskatchewan

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<sup>292</sup> Sheffield, 45-55.

<sup>293</sup> From 1942 until 1945 the Annual Reports of the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources provided statistics and comments on the wartime services of First Nations peoples across Canada. Enlistment numbers, financial contributions and even specific circumstances of First Nations soldiers were outlined in these reports and thus serve as a testament to the impressive involvement of First Nations in the Second World War.

<sup>294</sup> Sheffield, 55.

specifically, during and after the war were due to the returning Aboriginal veterans,” Innes instead proposed that these veterans, upon returning home, largely had other concerns.<sup>295</sup> Adjusting to civilian life, seeking new employment and reconnecting with families ensured that the involvement of First Nations veterans in the organizations was limited and passive.<sup>296</sup> Thus, the veterans according to Innes did not return to Saskatchewan to become political leaders or even active organizers in the political associations as previously held by other scholars. In fact, according to Innes, the argument that veterans were responsible for a resurgence of political activity after the war discounted the leadership and political organization that occurred prior to the conflict.<sup>297</sup>

While Innes’ assertion that the veterans were not directly responsible for the political movement is logical, it is clear that the returning soldiers had a profound effect on the movement that had already been established. It was often the case that political leaders who had been active prior to the war remained active after the conflict as well. Chief Joe Dreaver of the Mistawasis reserve, for example, served in both the First and Second World Wars, and in both instances, after the conflict, Dreaver resumed a leadership role in First Nations political organization.<sup>298</sup> Ultimately, the role of the Second World War should not be seen as a watershed moment responsible for the beginning of a political movement, but rather was a significant event that not only interrupted an already established political movement but later drew activists back to that movement.

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<sup>295</sup> Rob Innes, “The Socio-political Influence of the Second World War on Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans, 1945-1960.” Unpublished Master’s thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2000, 15-16.

<sup>296</sup> Innes, 1.

<sup>297</sup> Innes, 16.

<sup>298</sup> Solomon Sanderson, “Chief Joe Dreaver: Indian Statesman, Patriot and Soldier,” *Saskatchewan Indian* 1(2): October 1970. Recall that Chief Joe Dreaver was the leader of the Association of Indians of Saskatchewan. William Bird, a delegate at the Saskatoon Convention in 1946 was another activist who was involved in both the First and Second World Wars. Indians of North America—Societies, Union of Saskatchewan Indians, “Minutes of the Conference of Saskatchewan Indians,” 64.

The war was also significant in its role of shifting the established views of First Nations peoples in Canada. The steps made by the CCF and, to some extent, even the Patterson government, not only reflected a recognition that Native economic issues needed to be ameliorated, but also revealed the extent to which government attitudes were beginning to shift. The impact of public opinion was clearly a factor in government attempts to address Native issues, but Native political strategies which included such things as consulting non-Native professionals for political knowledge, and government lobbying, were also crucial in influencing government change.

It would be easy to assign the Department the role of oppressor and the Natives the part of victim by accusing the Department and the Canadian government of pursuing racist practices towards Native peoples. But it must be remembered that even as late as the 1930s, the Department struggled with Canada's Indian policy, especially with strategies relating to rising political activism. According to Taylor, although no uniform policy was developed for all First Nations people in Canada due to the differing social and economic situations, two general policy areas developed. The first addressed extinguishing First Nations title to land through the treaty system, while the second dealt with the administration of First Nations and their land through the Indian Act. Taylor has insisted that this policy framework ensured that there would be limited advancement within Indian policy, and as such, old policies would continue to be applied to new situations such as the rise of First Nations activism.<sup>299</sup> Keeping this in mind, it should be no surprise that the Department responded to Native political activities with disdain.

Expanding on this understanding of government political strategies, Paul Driben has argued that a general disconnect which existed between Native and non-Native understandings of Native issues was primarily the result of the groups talking past one another. According to Driben, the

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<sup>299</sup> John Leonard Taylor, *Canadian Indian Policy During the Interwar Years, 1918-1939* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1983), 4-5.

government and Native populations conceptualized Native claims in different ways: the government used politics to argue their case, while Native populations looked to culture to explain their rights.<sup>300</sup> The political element to governments' understanding of Native activism helps to explain government responses to Native political organization. The nature of democratic politics required governments to maintain public approval in order to stay in power, and, while the structure of Canadian politics should not be seen as a justification for the social, political and economic oppression of Native populations, many governments were not willing to risk losing public approval by employing risky policies in response to controversial issues.

In response to the ineffective Native policies of his government, Patterson admitted that "his government had been unable to evolve a satisfactory policy and that ... individual ministries and departments were left to their own devices in initiating stopgap measures, designed primarily to soften criticism of the government."<sup>301</sup> For the Patterson government, and likely, for most other governments, even the best intentions often did not translate well into practice. The political practices of the CCF government serve to further emphasize this point. While Douglas held a genuine concern for the wellbeing of Saskatchewan Natives and, in order to draw attention to the Department's poor Indian policy often intervened without authorization, Douglas' practices were not completely radical. Douglas did not empower First Nations organizations to a degree that threatened the federal government but rather offered what he could to ameliorate economic concerns.

The inability of governments to theorize and execute effective Native policies was clearly evident throughout the interwar era. That being said, there is evidence that between 1922 and 1946 the attitudes and abilities of the Department towards Native political organization began to change,

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<sup>300</sup> Paul Driben, "The Nature of Métis Claims," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3:1 (1983): 184.

<sup>301</sup> Barron, "The CCF and the Development of Métis Colonies," 248.

showing signs of increased accommodation. As Native organizations became more established within Saskatchewan, the political intentions of Native peoples became more difficult for the Department to ignore. The strategies of dismissal and ignorance masterfully employed by D.C. Scott in preceding years were no longer viable as First Nations and Métis were now well versed in constitutional issues and not only had the knowledge to tackle issues of social, economic and political rights, but further maintained the necessary support to do so. As a result, by the 1940s Department recognition of Native organizations and the plight of Native peoples can be seen.

Much of this thesis has been dedicated to the study of organized political action, yet in the north, where political organization was less pronounced unorganized political action was at work. Speaking to the political theories underpinning unorganized political action, James Scott's analysis of domination and resistance is helpful. Scott's work has exposed the existence of a more fluid power dynamic between the dominant and subordinate powers which highlights points of interaction. In exploring the esoteric areas of domination and resistance in which the powerless are granted control and the powerful knowingly relinquish their rule, Scott is able to portray resistance in a different light. In this way, Scott's theories reveal much about resistance amongst groups dominated through colonialism, serfdom and slavery, yet while his analysis is not completely applicable to Native political activism, it does apply to unorganized types of resistance. Scott's analysis addresses specific situations of unorganized resistance such as acts of "poaching, foot-dragging, pilfering, dissimulation, [and] flight" which helps to explain subordination employed by Native individuals outside of organized political societies. Such examples of unorganized resistance within Saskatchewan Native communities are especially prevalent in the north where, isolated from much of the organized political activities of the province, First Nations and Métis individuals were forced to employ their own methods of political resistance.

Northern economies were typically ideal places in which First Nations and Métis groups exercised forms of unorganized resistance. In response to game restrictions implemented by the Department and the Province, for example, First Nations and Métis groups began to employ tactics of subversion and interference. To this end, hunters and trappers in the north would often tip each other off to potential investigations of illegal hunting activity, or would try to get around the laws by technicalities.<sup>302</sup> These tactics largely developed out of failed attempts to argue with the game wardens about treaty rights. According to historian Anthony Gulig, "...the Indians knew well what answers to give when hassled by game guardians about their activities in the north. Simple agreement was easier and safer than arguing about treaty rights, for whenever they did argue with the game branch, the response was the same—more charges and more arrests."<sup>303</sup>

The idea that these subversive political tactics existed at all, however, is surprising considering Dobbin's belief that the northern Natives did not politicize to the same extent as their southern brothers. According to Dobbin, the dynamic of the north meant that "there was no class structure, no political leadership, no democratic institutions and no coherent communities, as such. There were only the highly individualistic Indian and Métis trappers widely dispersed over hundreds of thousands of acres."<sup>304</sup> Perhaps this insistence by Dobbin highlights the differences between political activism and political resistance. In the south, organization remained a goal as Native peoples sought to find a voice within the Canadian political system. In the north, where Canadian political activities were less prominent and populations more dispersed, simply maintaining control over access to resources was the foremost concern, and was something that

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<sup>302</sup> One such example of getting around a law by technicality is mentioned in Anthony Gulig's work, "'We Beg the Government': Native People and Game Regulation in Northern Saskatchewan, 1900-1940". Gulig writes that one hunter tried to avoid being charged for killing a moose by waiting for a wolf to kill the moose and then killing the wolf. Anthony Gulig, "'We Beg the Government': Native People and Game Regulation in Northern Saskatchewan, 1900-1940," *Prairie Forum* 28 no. 1 (Spring 2003): 86.

<sup>303</sup> Gulig, 90.

<sup>304</sup> Murray Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half-Men: The Story of Jim Brady & Malcolm Norris Métis Patriots of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981), 166-67.



could be done more effectively as individuals than it could as an organized group. Despite these differences, what remains clear is that the northern populations, too, had their place in the political activities of this era.

In attempting to highlight the political interactions between Native and non-Natives in Saskatchewan, this chapter has revealed the points at which Native political activism both worked within and opposed the political directions of the Canadian state. Forced to adapt to changing conditions within the province, different Native organizations adopted the necessary strategies to progress towards their political goals. Canadian governments, though sometimes accommodating the political actions of Native organizations by providing influential non-Natives to aid the Native movement, also seriously challenged Native political progress by imposing restrictions and aggravating internal divisions. In spite of government action, however, the adaptability and perseverance of Native political identities ensured the survival of the movement.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study of political activism does more than simply uncover information about the success of and challenges facing political organizations; it also helps to reveal changes in Native

identities as a result of political activism and speaks to the future of Native politics. Struggling with negative identity associations after 1885, Native populations largely withdrew from official forms of activism. Though still active in political resistance against restrictions on mobility and religious expression, there was a general lack of political organization in Saskatchewan. By the 1920s, however, with the end of the First World War Saskatchewan Native groups, influenced largely by a greater political movement, and later, depressed and restricted economies felt a resurgence of political activism.

By the 1930s that movement had manifested itself in official organizations which were designed to advance Native claims to better education and medical care, land and a degree of political autonomy. Opposition both from within Native communities and government institutions, however, caused Native organizations to falter, and despite regaining strength late in the Depression, the Second World War largely distracted the efforts of the organizations and led to a general decrease in organized political activities. After the war, however, Native groups were again motivated to continue their political journey, and through utilizing various political strategies, the groups attracted the attention and influence of non-Native professionals and provincial governments. While the degree to which this outside help aided the movement is debatable, the attention nevertheless granted a degree of legitimization to the movement.

The perseverance of Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis to gain political power through the interwar era is evident, and the strategies implemented by these groups speak not only to the political capabilities of Native people, but also to the persistent nature of Native political identity. Existing within a colonial environment which imposed non-Native political ideals did not result in the failure of Native political identities, but rather forced the adaptation and growth of such identities. The emergence of several key leaders throughout the interwar era helps to reinforce the

degree to which Native people self-identified as politically capable. Edward Ahenakew, John Tootoosis, Joe Dreaver, Joe Ross, Thomas Major, Fred De Laronde and many others entered the field of Native politics not necessarily because they made a conscious decision to be activists, but, rather, because they shared the belief that improvement was needed in the treatment of Native peoples in Canada, and they shared the drive to enact that change. Equally telling to the perseverance of Native political identity is the degree of politicization that took place in this era. Surely it cannot be coincidence that several leaders and organizations came onto the political scene simultaneously in the interwar era. Instead it is a testament to the conditions of the province and the Native populations that allowed for dormant political identities to become operative.

In contrast to the belief that Native activism did not exist in any real form between 1922 and 1946 as perpetuated by the lack of scholarship dedicated specifically to the topic, activism was in fact a real force. The lack of attention paid to this topic, however, has had profound implications on Canadians' views of Native politics. By refusing to acknowledge the political climate of the interwar years, it appears as though Native activism has been sporadic and explosive, and that activism only surfaced in reaction to specific events and not persistent injustices. Drawing attention to the presence of Native activism in the interwar era, and arguing for its significance helps bring a degree of power and legitimacy to the movement. In a time when Native issues are marred by sensationalized reports of violence, blockades and protest, understanding the modest roots of these events becomes important. Perhaps in appreciating how ingrained politics is in Native cultures, a greater effort could be made to ensure that Native and non-Native political systems find some common ground.

## **Appendix:**

## Saskatchewan Indian Bands and Reserves

Re- serve No.	Band	Reserve	Linguistic Grouping	Language	Re- serve No.	Band	Reserve	Linguistic Grouping	Language
20	Cumberland House	Cumberland	Algonkian	Cree	113	Sweet Grass	Sweet Grass	Algonkian	Cree
20A	Cumberland House	Pine Bluff	Algonkian	Cree	113A	Sweet Grass	Sweet Grass	Algonkian	Cree
20B	Cumberland House	Pine Bluff	Algonkian	Cree	113B	Sweet Grass	Sweet Grass	Algonkian	Cree
20C	Cumberland House	Muskeg River	Algonkian	Cree	114	Pound Maker	Pound Maker	Algonkian	Cree
20D	Cumberland House	Budd's Point	Algonkian	Cree	115B	Thunder Child	New Thunder Child	Algonkian	Cree
27A	The Pas	Carrot River	Algonkian	Cree	115C	Thunder Child	New Thunder Child	Algonkian	Cree
28A	Shoal Lake	Shoal Lake	Algonkian	Cree	115D	Thunder Child	New Thunder Child	Algonkian	Cree
29	Red Earth	Red Earth	Algonkian	Cree	116	Little Pine & Lucky	Little Pine & Lucky	Algonkian	Cree
29A	Red Earth	Carrot River	Algonkian	Cree					
64	Cote	Cote	Algonkian	Ojibway	117	Witchekan Lake	Witchekan Lake	Algonkian	Cree
65	Key	The Key	Algonkian	Ojibway	118	Big River	Big River	Algonkian	Cree
66	Keseekeoose	Keseekeoose	Algonkian	Ojibway	118A	Big River	Big River	Algonkian	Cree
66A	Keseekeoose	Keseekeoose	Algonkian	Ojibway	119	Onion Lake	Seekaskootch	Algonkian	Cree
70	White Bear	White Bear	Algonkian, Siouan	Assiniboine	120	Onion Lake	Makao	Algonkian	Cree
					124	Joseph Big Head	Big Head	Algonkian	Cree
71	Ochapowace	Ochapowace	Algonkian	Cree, Ojibwa	129	Loon Lake	Makwa Lake	Algonkian	Cree
72	Kahkewistahaw	Kahkewistahaw	Algonkian	Cree	129A	Loon Lake	Makwa Lake	Algonkian	Cree
73	Cowessess	Cowessess	Algonkian	Cree	129B	Loon Lake	Makwa Lake	Algonkian	Cree
73A	Sakimay	Little Bone	Algonkian	Cree	129C	Loon Lake	Makwa Lake	Algonkian	Cree
74	Sakimay	Sakimay	Algonkian	Cree	130	Waterhen	Waterhen	Algonkian	Cree
74A	Sakimay	Shesheep	Algonkian	Cree	156	Lac la Ronge	Lac la Ronge	Algonkian	Cree
75	Piapot	Piapot	Algonkian	Cree	156A	Lac la Ronge	Potato River	Algonkian	Cree
76	Carry the Kettle	Assiniboine	Siouan	Assiniboine, Dakota	156B	Lac la Ronge	Kitsakie	Algonkian	Cree
					156C	Lac la Ronge	Sucker River	Algonkian	Cree
78	Standing Buffalo	Standing Buffalo	Siouan	Dakota	157	Lac la Ronge	Stanley	Algonkian	Cree
79	Pasqua	Pasqua	Algonkian	Cree, Ojibway	157A	Lac la Ronge	Stanley	Algonkian	Cree
					157B	Lac la Ronge	Old Fort	Algonkian	Cree
80	Muscowpetung	Muscowpetung	Algonkian	Cree, Ojibway	157C	Lac la Ronge	Four Portages	Algonkian	Cree
80A	Muscowpetung	Last Mountain Lake	Algonkian	Cree, Ojibway	157D	Lac la Ronge	Fox Point	Algonkian	Cree
80B	Muscowpetung, Pasqua	Hay Grounds	Algonkian	Cree, Ojibway	157E	Lac la Ronge	Fox Point	Algonkian	Cree
81	Pespeekis	Pespeekis	Algonkian	Ojibway	158	Lac la Ronge	Little Hills	Algonkian	Cree
82	Okanees	Okanees	Algonkian	Cree, Ojibway	158A	Lac la Ronge	Little Hills	Algonkian	Cree
					158B	Lac la Ronge	Little Hills	Algonkian	Cree
83	Star Blanket	Star Blanket	Algonkian	Cree	159	Saulteaux	Saulteaux	Algonkian	Ojibway
84	Little Black Bear	Little Black Bear	Algonkian	Cree	159A	Saulteaux	Saulteaux	Algonkian	Ojibway
85	Muskowekwan	Muskowekwan	Algonkian	Ojibway	160	Wood Mountain	Wood Mountain	Siouan	Dakota
86	Gordon	Gordon	Algonkian	Cree, Ojibway	160A	Maple Creek	Maple Creek	Algonkian	Cree
					161	Island Lake	Ministlikwan	Algonkian	Cree
87	Day Star	Day Star	Algonkian	Cree	161A	Island Lake	Ministlikwan	Algonkian	Cree
88	Poorman	Poorman	Algonkian	Cree	165	Canoe Lake	Canoe Lake	Algonkian	Cree
89	Fishing Lake	Fishing Lake	Algonkian	Ojibway	165A	Canoe Lake	Canoe Lake	Algonkian	Cree
89A	Fishing Lake	Fishing Lake	Algonkian	Ojibway	165B	Canoe Lake	Canoe Lake	Algonkian	Cree
90	Nut Lake	Nut Lake	Algonkian	Ojibway	165C	Meadow Lake	Eagles Lake	Algonkian	Cree
91	Kinistino	Kinistino	Algonkian	Ojibway	184	Peter Ballantyne	Amisk Lake	Algonkian	Cree
91A	Kinistino	Kinistino	Algonkian	Ojibway	184A	Peter Ballantyne	Birch Portage	Algonkian	Cree
94	Moose Woods	White Cap	Siouan	Sioux	184B	Peter Ballantyne	Pelican Narrows	Algonkian	Cree
94A	Sioux Wahpeton	Wahpeton	Siouan	Dakota	184C	Peter Ballantyne	Sandy Narrows	Algonkian	Cree
94B	Sioux Wahpeton	Wahpeton	Siouan	Dakota	184D	Peter Ballantyne	Woody Lake	Algonkian	Cree
95	One Arrow	One Arrow	Algonkian	Cree	184E	Peter Ballantyne	Mitond Lake	Algonkian	Cree
96	Beardy's	Beardy's	Algonkian	Cree	184F	Peter Ballantyne	Sturgeon Weir	Algonkian	Cree
97	Okemasis	Okemasis	Algonkian	Cree	191	Pelican Lake	Chitke Lake	Algonkian	Cree
99	John Smith	Muskoday	Algonkian	Cree	192	English River	La Plonge	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
100	James Smith	James Smith	Algonkian	Cree	192A	English River	Elak Dase	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
100A	James Smith	Cumberland	Algonkian	Cree	192B	English River	Knee Lake	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
101	Sturgeon Lake	Sturgeon Lake	Algonkian	Cree	192C	English River	Dipper Rapids	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
101A	Sturgeon Lake	Sturgeon Lake	Algonkian	Cree	192D	English River	Wapachewunak	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
102	Muskeg Lake	Muskeg Lake	Algonkian	Cree	192E	English River	Ile-a-la-Crosse	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
103	Mistawasis	Mistawasis	Algonkian	Cree	192F	English River	Primeau Lake	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
104	Sandy Lake	Atakakup	Algonkian	Cree	193	Peter Pond Lake	Peter Pond Lake	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
105	Meadow Lake	Meadow Lake	Algonkian	Cree	193A	Peter Pond Lake	Church Hill Lake	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
105A	Meadow Lake	Meadow Lake	Algonkian	Cree	193B	Peter Pond Lake	Turnor Lake	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
106	Montreal Lake	Montreal Lake	Algonkian	Cree	194	Peter Pond Lake	Turnor Lake	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
106B	Montreal Lake	Montreal Lake	Algonkian	Cree	200	Peter Ballantyne	Southend	Algonkian	Cree
106C	Lac la Ronge	Little Red River	Algonkian	Cree	217	Lac la Ronge	Morin Lake	Algonkian	Cree
106D	Lac la Ronge	Little Red River	Algonkian	Cree	218	Lac la Ronge	Bittern Lake	Algonkian	Cree
108	Red Pheasant	Red Pheasant	Algonkian	Cree	219	Lac la Ronge	Grand Mother's Bay	Algonkian	Cree
109	Mosquito Grizzly Bear's Head	Mosquito	Siouan	Assiniboine	220	Lac La Hache	Lac La Hache	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
110-11	Mosquito Grizzly Bear's Head	Grizzly Bear's Head & Lean Man	Siouan	Assiniboine	221	Portage La Loche	LaLoche	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
112A	Moosomin	Moosomin	Algonkian	Cree	222	Portage La Loche	LaLoche	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
112B	Moosomin	Moosomin	Algonkian	Cree	223	Portage La Loche	LaLoche	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
112E	Moosomin	Moosomin	Algonkian	Cree	224	Stony Rapids	Chicken	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
112F	Moosomin	Moosomin	Algonkian	Cree	225	Stony Rapids	Chicken	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
					226	Stony Rapids	Chicken	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
					227	Fond du lac	Fond du lac	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
					228	Fond du lac	Fond du lac	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
					229	Fond du lac	Fond du lac	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
					230	Sakimay	Minoachchak	Algonkian	Cree

Source: *The Canadian Atlas of Aboriginal Settlement* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute of Métis Studies and Applied Research, 1994), 13.

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